Past imperfect continuous: remembering Serbia's 1915 retreat one hundred years later

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II

Literature Review: Memory, Identity, History, Serbia

Introduction

In his introduction to *Commemorations. The Politics of National Identity*, John Gillis seems exasperated with today's practice of remembering the past: "everyone is obsessed with recording, preserving, and remembering".[153] Gillis is describing a phenomenon known as *memory boom* — a surge of interest in the past primarily by people who are not historians. The general public have been increasingly drawn to heritage centres, memorials, monuments, living history museums, and other forms of representations of past events, as well as to their own family histories and ancestry searches. This interest in the past, particularly in war, as pointed out by Jay Winter,[154] has been matched by a growing need to memorialise historical events, or to remember those who participated in them. The Balkans, often diagnosed as suffering from *a surfeit of history* cannot get enough of being reminded of the past. In an article in the *Balkanist* from August 2017, Ana Milošević writes about "memory

153 John R. Gillis, ed., *Commemorations. The Politics of National Identity.* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996), 7.

154 Jay Winter, *Remembering War. The Great War Between Memory and History in the Twentieth Century. (New Haven & London: Yale University Pres, 2006),* 6.

mania" in the Balkans as a substitute for the process of coming to terms with the past, with memorials used to paper over the cracks of recent history, or to present the past in a particular way. Milošević suggests that "memory and memorialization have become the dominant way to speak about the past (let's not be pretentious and say history)".[155] Past wars and battlefield tourism have long been popular and the so-called *dark tourism* or *thanatourism* has been on the rise in recent years.[156] Battle re-enactments are growing in popularity.[157] In turn, academics and researchers have unsurprisingly become captivated by the phenomenon and the memory fervour has translated into a substantial body of research on this topic, present study included. Eelco Runia even speaks of "infected historians" amid the growing popularity of commemorations, and a tension between the trauma of the past and the need to deal with it.[158] The point of origin of the memory surge can undoubtedly be connected to the end of the Cold War.[159] A seemingly stable and immovable international order, where two ideologically opposed sides defined the roles and purposes in that order since 1946, was suddenly upended in 1989. The fall of the Berlin Wall, the subsequent redrawing of Europe's map, and of national allegiances — as well as the Balkan wars of the 1990s of specific interest for this study — took everyone by surprise. Such tremendous changes in the world they were living in necessarily brought into question people's understanding of their place in the newly transformed environment and by extension their identity. If they were no longer citizens of a country defined by, among other things, its ideological opposition to another, then *who* were they? In the same vein, in the case of the former Yugoslavia, if the socialist *brotherhood and unity* motto was no longer the principle to live by, what

155 Ana Milošević, "Placing All Bets on Memorials: Memory Mania Goes Balkans", *Balkanist*, 21 August 2017 https://balkanist.net/placing-all-bets-on-memorials-memory-mania-goes-balkans/ (accessed March 20, 2018).

156 Delphine Lauwers, "Battlefields as tourist attractions, Britons travelling to the Ypres Salient since 1919", working paper *Transatlantic tourism workshop*, (October 2011), 3.

157 At the *To End All Wars?* (TEAW?) conference, Ypres, 22-25 August 2018, Jay Winter reported that there had been 256 re-enactments in the previous 12 months.

158 Eelco Runia, "Burying the dead, creating the past". *History and Theory* 46 (October 2007), 315.

159 Cindy Minarova-Banjac, "Collective Memory and Forgetting: A Theoretical Discussion" *Centre for East-West Cultural and Economic Studies*, (research paper no. 16, 2018), 4.

was the new principle and the narrative it was based on? If the stories we have lived by are no longer resonating, what is the next master narrative? And more importantly, who will write it?

The political upheaval in Europe that saw the end of the Cold War brought on the need for people "to choose or create new political identities".[160] Considering John Gillis's view that memory and identity have an interdependent relationship and that "we are constantly revising our memories to suit our current identities",[161] it is apparent that these concepts — Gillis calls them social and political constructs — are not just fluid but completely unstable. Yet, memory and identity feature prominently as a part of any nation's historical foundation: how the history of a country is remembered is part of the self-image of the country and its people:[162] the way the community of people *imagine* themselves to be. This imagined identity has been dissected by Benedict Anderson who used the term "emotional legitimacy"[163] to describe the popularity of the nation — essentially an invention. According to Cindy Minarova-Banjac, since "narratives of the past are used to legitimise national identities", they have a role in influencing domestic and foreign policy.[164] Narratives of the past matter. *National memory* is in fact necessary, according to Anthony Smith: "the concept of the nation cannot be sustained without a suitable past and a believable future".[165] Gillis goes on to say that "identities and memories are not things we think *about* but things we think *with*".[166] In other words, identity and memory are part of a belief system determining a nation's set of values, what they believe to be true or false, and right or wrong.

160 Minarova Banjac, 2018, 5.
161 Gillis, 1996, 3.
162 Minarova Banjac, 2018, 9.
163 Anderson, 1991, 6.
164 Minarova Banjac, 2018, 3.
165 Anthony Smith, "The 'Golden Age' and National Renewal" in Geoffrey Hosking and George Schöpflin, eds. *Myths and Nationhood*. (London: Hurst & Company, 1997), 36.
166 Gillis, 1996, 5.

However, *memory boom* is more than just a by-product of the end of the Cold War. For Aleida Assmann the memory boom is about reclaiming "the past as an indispensable part of the present", as identities and allegiances shift in a "post-individualist age",[167] in an evaluation process of deciding where we belong. For Jay Winter, *memory boom* is multifaceted. It comprises the sense of a "duty to remember" but mutating memory is also "taking on a life of its own"[168] where he sees the risk of "total collapse of history into memory".[169] Tzvetan Todorov calls it a "cult of memory", growing in Europe, particularly in France.[170] Pierre Nora, seen as having greatly contributed to, if not actually triggered the memory boom in France and elsewhere with his in-depth journey through France's sites of memory,[171] felt that in contrast to history, memory was self-serving as it "only accommodates those facts that serve it".[172] Nora believed that the memory boom would "hasten the death of the nation state".[173] Looking at Europe in the second decade of the 21st century, this prediction has most certainly turned out wrong. The nation state — with its master narratives, its national symbols, its myths, and its *memories* — has never looked more alive. While the reasons for this revival are outside the scope of this research, the questions to be explored next are divided into five clusters, first briefly introduced, then treated in depth:

1. **Memory, remembrance, and forgetting**. The theoretical framework for understanding memory in this research is primarily based on the work of Jay Winter and his interpretation of Maurice Halbwachs's analysis of *collective memory* in conjunction with the ideas developed by Aleida

167 Aleida Assmann "Reframing memory. Between individual and collective forms of constructing the past", in Karin Tilmans, Frank van Vree and Jay Winter (eds.), *Performing the Past. Memory, History and Identity in Modern Europe,* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2010), 39.

168 Winter, 2006, 283.

169 Winter, 2006, 284.

170 Tzvetan Todorov, *Les Abus de la Mémoire* (Paris: Arléa, 2015), 50.

171 Pierre Nora, ed. *Les Lieux de Mémoire,* (Paris: Gallimard, 1997). The first volume, *La République,* was published in 1984, followed by *Nation* in three volumes, in 1986. *Les France* in three volumes was published in 1992.

172 Nora, 1989, 8.

173 Winter, 2006, 284.

Assmann, Avishai Margalit, and others. The terms *popular memory*, *collective memory*, and *national memory* are often used interchangeably, yet have different points of departure even if they have overlapping features. According to Jay Winter, when we describe groups of people who gather to recollect past events in public, we are talking about *collective remembrance*, not *collective memory*. But there is also collective forgetting which plays an important part in a nation's history and identity. Ernest Renan first rationalised the role of forgetting in his treatise on what constitutes a nation,[174] Avishai Margalit set out to define an ethics of memory and endeavoured to deconstruct the relationship between forgetting and forgiveness, while Paul Connerton[175] categorised the types of forgetting.

2. **National identity**. National memory, overlying in parts with national historical narrative, closely follows another social construct — national identity. David Lowenthal links it to the concept of "having a heritage and thinking it unique",[176] underscoring the difference in relation to *the other*, while Anthony Smith delves into the complexity of the functions of national identity — it fulfils many purposes.[177] For Chris Lorentz, the way national identity is constructed is clear — "by negating other nations and other groups within the nation".[178] The feeling of belonging to a nation on the basis of (constructed) similarity may be *imagined* — as Anderson described it in *Imagined Communities*,[179] or *invented* — as Hobsbawm advanced in *The Invention of Tradition*.[180]

174 Ernest Renan, Qu'est-ce qu'une nation? (1882) http://classiques.uqac.ca/classiques/renan_ernest/qu_est_ce_une_nation/renan_quest_ce_une_nation.pdf (accessed March 15, 2017).

175 Paul Connerton, *How Societies Remember* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989) and "Seven types of forgetting" (*Memory Studies 1(1)* 2008: 59-71).

176 David Lowenthal, "Identity, Heritage and History" in Gillis, *Commemorations*, 1996, 47.

177 Anthony D. Smith, *The Nation in History. Historiographical Debates about Ethnicity and Nationalism* (Cambridge. Polity Press, 2000).

178 Chris Lorenz, "Unstuck in time. Or: the sudden presence of the past", in Tilmans, van Vree and Winter, 2010, 78.

179 Anderson, 1991.

180 Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger, eds. *The Invention of Tradition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983).

3. ***Usable pasts.***[181] The interpretation of the term depends on the context, meaning history as a model or inspiration, or as history instrumentalised. Taking *usable past* to denote general national historical awareness, a kind of perspective of the past which serves as an exemplary and usable narrative, prone to instrumentalisation, leads us to inquire into how national mythic pasts get constructed, then remembered, and then *repurposed*. Popular history and myths are used regularly for legitimising political actions. These *usable pasts* can turn out to be the Golden Age or the Dark Age of a nation, glorious victories or disastrous defeats, depending on the circumstance.

Through the examples of Kosovo, Masada and Joan of Arc, as analysed by Paul Cohen, we look at the impact of such myths on the collective psyche of a nation.

4. **Memorialisation.** Remembrance of the First World War constitutes the wider context of this study, with the 1915 Retreat across Albania as Serbia's central event of the war its focus. More generally and more globally, the First World War has shaped the way we mourn, remember, and commemorate the dead in armed conflicts. The practice of memorialising the unknown soldier to symbolise all those who died in the war and who could not be found was established in its wake. In examining the study of remembrance of the First World War by Jay Winter, we look at the ways the remembering is manifested, and mediated. Through memorial functions and conventions, we examine the question of the ownership of memory of events such as the First World War.

5. **Serbia.** Finally, the present research will look at the case of Serbia as "the true laboratory for research into rapid changes of memory" as described by Dubravka Stojanović in her series of lucid essays, *Populism the*

181 The term "usable past" appears in J.P. Stern, "Germans and the German Past" (*London Review of Books,* Vol. 11, no. 24. 21 December 1989): 7-9. https://www.lrb.co.uk/v11/n24/jp-stern/germans-and-the-german-past (accessed January 2, 2019)

Serbian way.[182] For Stojanović, memory is "one of the populist symptoms", and in the case of Serbian public opinion, has been used as a tool for creating all the necessary conditions for war.[183] This leads us to examine the prevalence of the largely nationalistic discourse which supports the references to historical events in Serbian public life, media and education. Historical events are used to explain contemporary ones. The Kosovo battle served that purpose many times in Serbia, and its matrix has been transferred to the First World War as a parallel "sacrificial narrative," according to Nevena Daković.[184] The examination of this concept explains why the World War I centenary commemorations made front-page news in Serbia for the wrong reasons, and why the past in Serbia appears to be more uncertain than the future.[185]

1. Memory, Remembrance and Forgetting

> "Nations do not remember, people do."[186]

In her celebrated Harry Potter book series, J.K. Rowling created horrific creatures called *dementors*.[187] Dementors are dark and hooded figures without visible faces who guard Azkaban, the notorious prison for convicted wizards and witches. When they attack, dementors radiate chill and dread, sucking out all the happy memories from their victims who become enveloped in crushing sorrow and despair which paralyses them. The only way that dementors can be repelled is for the wizard or the witch to remember the happiest memory they have and to summon it vividly in their mind. This memory, together with a special magic spell will produce a *patronum*, a kind of guardian angel that will chase away

182 Dubravka Stojanović, *Populism the Serbian Way* (Belgrade: Peščanik, 2017).
183 Stojanović, 2017, 10.
184 Nevena Daković, "The Serbian mythomoteur as sacrificial narrative" *Frontiers of Narrative Studies* (4(1) (2018)): 140-145.
185 Stojanović, 2017, 10.
186 Jay Winter has used this sentence in different forms in several of his works. The form quoted here was noted at the *To End All Wars?* (TEAW?) conference, Ypres, 22-25 August 2018.
187 J.K. Rowling, *The Prisoner of Azkaban* (London: Bloomsbury Press, 1999).

the dementors. The idea is both imaginative and rational, even if it all takes place in a fantasy novel. We think of memory as power — as long as we remember good things from the past, they have not gone, they live inside us and they will give us strength when we need it. All we need to do is to *remember* and we will be saved.

Memory has value while forgetting is associated with a lack of caring.[188] Loss of memory indicates sickness or failure. Personal memories can be lost through disease, group memories are erased as punishment, or deleted for political reasons, to change the way the past is remembered. Long before Stalin took to having official photographs altered, removing his freshly disappeared enemies from pictures as if they had never existed;[189] it was common practice in Ancient Rome to remove the depictions of those who had fallen from grace. *Bad emperors*, those who had been deposed, or others who had conspired against the ruling emperor, would be condemned to a *damnatio memoriae*,[190] destroying *any* memory of them. This resulted in an *abolitio memoriae* — they were to be removed from public remembrance — from monuments, reliefs or portraits anywhere in public spaces, including from the coins with their likenesses.[191]

Memory is everywhere. We depend upon it for making our way in the world, establishing relationships and planning for the future. Experience would not exist without memory. Memory is personal but it can also be shared. Memory is "individual, unreproducible" according to Susan Sontag[192] and yet it can be disputed, and it usually is. Apart from the debate if *memory* is the term that should be used at all,[193] there are also

188 "Memory is partly constitutive of the notion of care", in Margalit, 2004, 28.

189 Robert Conquest, "Inside Stalin's Darkroom", *Hoover Digest*, 30 April 1998 https://www.hoover.org/research/inside-stalins-darkroom (accessed May 15, 2018).

190 This is a modern term, dating from 17th Century.

191 Eric R. Varner, *Mutilation and Transformation: Damnatio Memoriae and Roman Imperial Portraiture* (Leiden/Boston: Brill, 2004), 2.

192 Sontag, 2004, 76.

193 Aleida Assmann "Reframing memory. Between individual and collective forms of constructing the past" in Karin Tilmans, Frank van Vree and Jay Winter (eds.). *Performing the Past. Memory, History and Identity in Modern Europe* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2010), 35. Assmann complains that "memory discourse lacks academic vigour".

arguments why memory should be studied in relation to a group, to a *collectivity*, rather than in relation to an individual. In the preface to *The Social Frameworks of Memory*, Maurice Halbwachs explains that memory should always be considered in society because this is where these memories are made and recalled.[194] Looking at memory individually misses the point. For Halbwachs, it is the existence of the "social frameworks for memory"[195] — one of his key terms — that *makes* memory a memory. Halbwachs uses the term "collective" to complement the term "memory". He does not deny the existence of individual consciousness or individual memory, but the memories that seemingly belong just to us, only make sense in relation to other people in the group.[196] When Halbwachs takes the example of family memories,[197] he maintains that if we considered them individually, they would appear as a series of images, without the family context that gives them full meaning. Collective memory is greater than the sum of its parts. The images of an event from our past are collections of details and fragments, not just of that event but of many other events in the same context. It is actually a *collage*[198] that we are seeing, although we are deluding ourselves that it's a snapshot, which Halbwachs calls "a reconstructed picture".[199] In *The Reconstruction of the Past*, Halbwachs dwells on how recalling the past produces "an altered version" — remembering *accurately* is an illusion.[200] Although the community elders have a role to play, to tell us of the past we do not know, they too will be experiencing "an altered version" of the past, and past times will be remembered as better and more colourful.[201] For Halbwachs, this is "retrospective mirage" when older people remember the past and conclude that things used to be better and brighter. As the poet Jacques Prévert expressed this sentiment: "*la vie était plus belle, et le*

194 Halbwachs, 1992, 43.
195 Halbwachs 1992, 38.
196 Halbwachs, 1992, 53.
197 Halbwachs, 1992, 55.
198 "Memory is a product of a multitude of impulses drawn together in form of a collage", Winter, 2006, 4.
199 Halbwachs, 1992, 60.
200 Halbwachs, 1992, 47.
201 Halbwachs, 1992, 48.

soleil plus brûlant qu'aujourd'hui".[202] The concept of "retrospective mirage" plays a role in summoning emotions when it comes to describing past events. It also underlines the volatility of memory, amplified by the role of the group — we do not all remember the same things in the same way.

When speaking about groups of people remembering events, nations *remembering* their pasts, the term habitually used was the one coined by Maurice Halbwachs, *collective memory*. However, *memory* as a term, just like memory as an illusion of perfect recall, projects more power than it has. For Jay Winter, *memory* is "unstable, plastic, synthetic, and repeatedly reshaped".[203] Winter has clarified his rationale for preferring the term *remembrance* to the term *memory*, specifically the term *collective remembrance* as opposed to *collective memory* when referring to groups of people who "act in public to conjure up the past".[204] Jay Winter and Emmanuel Sivan, in their introduction to the collection of essays entitled *War and Remembrance in the Twentieth Century*, used the term "public recollection"[205] to define collective remembrance. In his later work, Winter makes further clarifications when he differentiates globally recognised events such as the assassination of J. F. Kennedy, or the events of 11 September 2001, where people appear to remember them with great precision and have *collective memory* about them, from the events that are only relevant for certain groups of people, such as *Anzac Day* on 25 April, solely meaningful for Australians and New Zealanders.[206] The term *collective* does not necessarily indicate parallels of experience, only the focus of the remembrance, especially in the case of global events. Winter is opposed to using the term *collective memory* for nations by saying that "national collectives never created a unitary, undifferentiated, and enduring narrative called collective memory".[207] Through this reasoning,

202 Jacques Prévert, « Les feuilles mortes », *Soleil de nuit* https://www.eternels-eclairs.fr/poemes-prevert.php (accessed January 22, 2019).
203 Winter, 2006, 4.
204 Winter, 2006, 5.
205 Jay Winter and Emmanuel Silvan, eds. *War and Remembrance in the Twentieth Century.* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 6.
206 Winter, 2006, 5.
207 Winter, 2006, 198.

Winter upholds Halbwachs's plurality of memory. Different versions and different voices make up *collective remembrance*. In what has become Winter's *profession de foi*, he reiterates that "nations do not remember; groups of people do."[208] Winter insists on the *plurality* of remembrances as well as on the *actions* of remembrance, on memorial practices that groups of people carry out. It is the shared and public nature of the practice that embodies the collective remembrance of an event.

Turning now to the term *national memory*, although used extensively, it is also problematic because it links the personal quality of memory with the broad principle of a nation. Referring back to Halbwachs's exploration of family memories, they can be shared or *collective* because family members live together and know each other, and we can say that the memory, or memories, belong to all of them. In the case of a much larger group, such as a nation, the question is how can we have shared memories with people we don't know? Gillis pins down this incongruity when he says that "national memory is shared by people who have never seen or heard of one another, yet who regard themselves as having a common history."[209] Furthermore, as Aleida Assmann has pointed out, this *national memory* it is not actually *memory* at all. The past that *we share* with our fellow citizens is something we have had to learn, we do not *remember* it at all, in fact, the past has had to be memorised.[210] Assmann agrees with Winter that "institutions and larger social groups, such as nations, states, the church, or a business firm do not *have* a memory, they *make* one for themselves."[211] We could then also understand *memory* as an education endeavour, mediated by an arsenal of artefacts, museums, monuments, commemorations, memorial performances. By seeing the past represented in this way, we learn it and *remember* it. But this is only one aspect of collective remembrance of a nation, or *national memory*, these terms used with all the reservations already expressed. For Aleida Assmann, the

208 Winter, 2006, 198.
209 Gillis, 1996, 8.
210 Assmann, in Tilmans, van Vree and Winter, 2010, 38.
211 Assmann, in Tilmans, van Vree and Winter, 2010, 42.

term *collective memory* is as an umbrella term for different "formats of memory."[212] Subsequently, Assmann substituted *collective memory* with three distinct terms: *social memory*, *political memory*, and *cultural memory*.[213] *Social memory* encompasses the past accrued in a society which changes with generations, reconstructed with each new generation, and just like individual memory, it is embodied, it needs no mediation. *Political memory* is relevant for the development of national identities, determines how memories are represented in private and public spaces, as well as how they are constructed or altered for political reasons. Political memory is embedded in the national identity narrative, it is "anchored" in it, as Assmann put it, and requires mediation through monuments, commemorations, so it can be passed on to the new generation.[214] *Cultural memory*, consists of "storing information deemed vital for the constitution and continuation of a specific group" and Assmann divides it into the active part of cultural memory, "canon", and the passive part, "archive". While canon has been selected as representative cultural memory, what is *worth remembering* and passing on to the following generations, archive is not part of common knowledge or general awareness, although it is also being stored. Assmann's categorisation of distinct memories within *collective memory* is moored in Halbwachs's "social frameworks of memory" as all of the "formats of memory" are contingent on groups and their interactions and activities.

We have seen that memory is as much about social learning as it is about remembering. As Winter and Sivan restate in *War and Remembrance in the Twentieth Century*, societies do not learn, only individuals in societies do.[215] For them an individual engages in social learning by assimilating *scripts* about themselves and their relationships with the environment. By enlarging this notion, we could say that social learning is also about memorising expectations that people have of themselves and each other

212 Aleida Assmann, "Transformation between History and Memory", *Social research* (Vol 75: No 1: Spring 2008), 55.
213 Assmann, in Tilmans, van Vree and Winter, 2010, 41.
214 Assmann, in Tilmans, van Vree and Winter, 2010, 43.
215 Winter and Sivan, 2000, 16.

on the basis of narratives. In the case of nations, these narratives as the vessels of shared *memories* — social, political, cultural — carry the lessons that we have absorbed over time. Could national memory be viewed as an *assortment* of history lessons? *The Best of*? Much of what is frequently called *national memory* is a selection of significant events from a nation's past that largely overlap with the national identity narrative.[216] National memory includes national forgetting which is as indispensable for a nation as remembering. In his speech from 1882, *Qu'est-ce qu'une nation*, Ernest Renan sees forgetting as a constitutive part of nation forming. He looks back at the history of France and brings up numerous "faits de violence" that *had to have been forgotten* so that France could exist in its current form: "*tout citoyen français* ***doit avoir oublié***",[217] as Benedict Anderson notes. For Anderson, Renan uses this turn of phrase to indicate forgetting as a "prime contemporary civic duty".[218] As Anderson observes, there was nothing particularly French in the way that parts of national history were forgotten, it was a common occurrence in other nations too. Nor does Anderson believe that all of the forgetting was designed to shape the past in a particular way — some forgetting just happened.[219] Forgetting is a fact born out of pragmatism — the further back we go in history, the more things there are to forget. And as Renan maintains, a nation is made up of people who have things in common and who have also forgotten some of them.[220] For Anderson too, amnesia is part of the biographical narrative of every nation.[221] Without forgetting, there is no reinvention possible, no changing of consciousness. This is reflected in many cultures. In Chinese mythology, Old Lady Meng makes the soup that will cause forgetting, necessary to forget the past life and be reborn.[222] In ancient Greek mythology, the river Lethe caused oblivion,

216 Sontag remarked that "collective memory is not remembering but a stipulating: that this is important, and *this* is the story about how it happened", Sontag, 2004, 76.
217 Renan, 1882, 38.
218 Anderson, 1991, 200.
219 Anderson, 1991, 201.
220 Renan, 1882, 38.
221 Anderson, 1991, 204.
222 Minarova-Banjac, 2018, 23.

essential for the soul to be reincarnated.[223] Forgetting is normal, necessary, and can even be desirable. In differentiating the reasons for forgetting, Connerton links *repressive erasure* to authoritarian regimes, such as Stalin's deletion of former comrades from pictures, while *prescriptive forgetting* is done in political attempts to enforce reconciliation, such as in 403 B.C.E. Athens, when citizens were "forbidden to remember all the crimes and wrongdoing"[224] in the previous period to ensure resolution, or as in the Treaty of Westphalia, when warring sides were instructed that "all that has pass'd on the one side, and the other, as well before as during the War, (…) shall be entirely abolish'd in such a manner that all that might be demanded of, or pretended to, by each other on that behalf, shall be bury'd in eternal Oblivion."[225] *Forgetting as annulment* comprises two contrasting sides of the forgetting rationale, one denoting omission of those parts of history or genealogy that are considered unimportant (male lineage is often considered more important than female), and the other representing the accumulation of information in, for instance, archives, which because it has been stored, is forgotten.[226] *Forgetting as humiliated silence* relates to matters from the past that are not spoken about, not forgotten, but not acknowledged as remembered. Connerton gives the example of 10 million war invalids from the main combatant countries after the First World War who were never remembered, acknowledged, or memorialized. While those who were "safely dead" were remembered, the invalids were condemned to be forgotten and ignored, particularly those whose faces had been so badly hurt that they were deformed.[227] Connerton's critics[228] may be right that factors involved in forgetting of any type are too complex, or too dependent on other influences and

223 Minarova-Banjac, 2018, 24.

224 Connerton, 2008, 62.

225 Treaty of Westphalia, II. 24 October 1648 https://www.marxists.org/history/capitalism/un/treaty-westphalia.htm (accessed 20 January, 2019).

226 Connerton, 2008, 65. This would parallel Aleida Assmann's understanding of archive as part of *cultural memory*.

227 Connerton, 2008, 69. See also, Winter on *gueules cassées* in Winter and Sivan, 1999, "The men with the broken faces", 48-54.

228 Scott Timcke, "Is All Reification Forgetting?: On Connerton's Types of Forgetting", *tripleC* (11(2) 2013), 375.

considerations to be simplified in a categorization of this kind. However, Connerton's taxonomy helps us identify these influences when we look at the way societies remember and forget, or rather, to emulate Winter's dictum, the many ways that individuals, or groups of people remember and forget in a society. Connerton demonstrates that forgetting is inherent in remembering since by selecting what is to be discarded, we are left with memory.[229] The next question is whether it is at all possible have an authentic relationship with memory.

In his book *The Ethics of Memory*, Avishai Margalit builds on Halbwachs's frameworks of memory by examining the duty of remembering the past, and the moral dimensions of remembering and forgetting. In his reassessment of the relationship between remembering and caring, Margalit concludes that the relationship is conditional rather than contingent. If one cares *and* remembers, then remembering is essential.[230] Margalit further engages with Heidegger's concept of caring as a fundamental characteristic of being human — *Sorge* — pointed towards the future, which Margalit turns towards the past: "When we care about another, we find it **natural** to expect the other to be one with whom we share a common past and common memories."[231] [emphasis mine]. Margalit does warn that this kind of caring can turn *ethnocentric*. So, he distinguishes the ties between people, denoting them as "thick relations" and "thin relations".[232] Margalit considers that the former are ties to family members, one's nation, or an association, and that they are guided by ethics, while the latter, ties to other human beings, or human beings by categories (all women, all men) are ties directed by morality. Margalit turns to the concept of common memory as a collection of *individual* memories of the same event, distinguishing it from the concept of *shared* memory, which he considers to be a plurality of perspectives of the same event, with shared memory depending on communication.[233] Since remembering

229 Lowenthal, in Gillis, 1996, 171.
230 Margalit, 2004, 30.
231 Margalit, 2004, 35.
232 Margalit, 2004, 37-38.
233 Margalit, 2004, 48-51.

and forgetting is involuntary, Margalit argues in favour of a "community of memory" which would share the work of memory — "mnemonic labour".[234] This would extend through generations passing the shared memories to the following ones. At the same time, he acknowledges that for individuals to remember is to *know* while for a community to *remember* is more akin to *believe*. Since an event was remembered through "the division of diachronic labor", and there being no one alive who remembers it today, the event becomes a memory of a memory of an event.[235] Although it would be *natural* to think of communities such as "families, clans, tribes, religious communities and nations" as communities of memory, Margalit is in favour of a universal ethical community which would have a duty to remember "striking examples of radical evil and crimes against humanity",[236] to prevent "radical evil forces" from controlling collective memory and rewriting the past.[237] Preserving the memory of the past *as is* would be the duty of the communities of memory, they would be the *we* who remember because *we* care.

Margalit's vision of an ethics of memory is completed with his evaluation of forgiving and forgetting.[238] Margalit connects the two through an examination of forgiveness as a concept in the Judeo-Christian tradition. He looks for coherence in the complex relationship between the two, with forgetting being involuntary, and forgiveness voluntary, he pleads for the primacy of forgiveness as a moral and ethical duty. By prioritising forgiveness, Margalit believes that forgetting is resolved: "forgetting an emotion in the sense of not reliving it when memory of the event comes to mind".[239] Margalit's argument in favour of forgiveness resonates strongly with political problems of today, where memory of past perceived injustices and injuries contribute to preventing people from leading a normal life: in Israel and Palestine, in Serbia and Kosovo, in Cyprus,

234 Margalit, 2004, 58.
235 Margalit, 2004, 59.
236 Margalit, 2004, 78.
237 Margalit, 2004, 83.
238 Margalit, 2004, 183.
239 Margalit, 2004, 208.

among Greeks and Turks, and many others. For Minarova-Banjac in "Collective Memory and Forgetting: A Theoretical Discussion", forgetting can be liberating, "for individuals and communities who seek to separate themselves from old traditions and memories that continue to impact current politics."[240] However, liberation has to be chosen, it cannot come by itself. In the context of a nation, forgiveness and forgetting of "ancient grievances"[241] can be seen as a betrayal of ancestors. Because of memory's essential role in identity, would giving up that memory necessarily mean forsaking one's identity?

Identity, more precisely, national identity, is our next subject of exploration. National identity is probably the first tool used in the construction of populist rhetoric, closely followed by the invocation of the danger of *losing it*. National identity, as a sense of belonging to a group, represents the essence of "thick relations", these strong, yet *coincidental* bonds that are in resurgence across the world.

2. National Identity as a Search for Meaning

> «Si je savais une chose utile à ma nation qui fût ruineuse à une autre, je ne la proposerais pas à mon prince, parce que je suis homme avant d'être Français (ou bien) parce que je suis nécessairement homme et que je ne suis Français que par hasard.»[242]

French philosopher and writer Montesquieu (1689 – 1755) was born 41 years after the Treaty of Westphalia, which counts as the birth of the nation state and state sovereignty.[243] Nevertheless, Montesquieu clearly felt that his "thick relations", as Margalit would term them, were encompassing the people of the world, rather than just the people of

240 Minarova-Banjac, 2018, 21.
241 Sontag thought that "too much remembering (of ancient grievances: Serbs, Irish) embitters", Sontag, 2004, 103.
242 Montesquieu, *Cahiers* : *1716 – 1755* (Paris : Grasset, 1941), 344.
243 Smith, 2000, 28.

his nation state, France, which he considered to have been born in by pure coincidence — "*que par hasard*". If we apply Margalit's principles, Montesquieu felt that he owed both moral and ethical duties to everyone, not just to his coincidental compatriots. His identity, as he intuited it, was far broader than the boundaries of his country, for he was a true citizen of the world. This is not just gleaned from his famous quote, but also on the basis of his broader work, especially his subversively entertaining *Lettres Persanes* where he played with imagining what an 18th-century Persian traveller could say about the mores of the French on his visit to France.[244] In this too Montesquieu was ahead of his time because he was able to conceive of *another* identity — regardless of the fact that his purpose was to satirise French society by using the voice of another as a tool. In letter no. 30 of the *Lettres Persanes*, he relates the amusement of the Persian traveller upon hearing the reaction of the confused Frenchmen to him about being what he is — a Persian: *"Ah! Ah! Monsieur est Persan? C'est une chose bien extraordinaire! Comment peut-on être Persan?"*[245] In other words, how is it even possible to be something else, *other* than what we are? Here Montesquieu tackles *othering*[246] *avant la lettre*, of those who may be different in dress, customs, and language and yet are people just like us. Montesquieu's principles clearly meant that his nationality was not his choice but that his conduct was. We could say that he had weighed the identities' order of values and chose his humanity over his identity as a Frenchman.

Several centuries later, what has been so elegantly phrased by an 18th-century philosopher remains largely unresolved in the world today. The subject of national belonging determining the priorities of action with regard to narrow interests, as opposed to more general interests of humanity, is contentious and affecting every aspect of life, from personal

244 Montesquieu, *Lettres Persanes* (Paris: Garnier Flammarion, 1964).

245 Montesquieu, 1964, 65.

246 john a powell, "Us vs them: the sinister techniques of 'Othering' and how to avoid them", *The Guardian*, 8 November 2017 https://www.theguardian.com/inequality/2017/nov/08/us-vs-them-the-sinister-techniques-of-othering-and-how-to-avoid-them (accessed 20 January, 2019).

freedom to climate change. In fact, one could say that the narrow interests of nation states with their "phenomena" as Eric Hobsbawm termed them, are winning. Identity seems to counter individuality and freedom of choice. Amartya Sen, in his book *Identity and Violence — The Illusion of Destiny*,[247] describes identity as "singular affiliation" which reduces a human being to just one identity, while, Sen argues, each individual belongs to several groups, and we have to recognise "that identities are robustly plural, and that the importance of one identity need not obliterate the importance of others."[248] Sen disputes the assumed priority of community-based identity upheld by what he calls "communitarian thinking". The communitarian worldview has been growing in popularity promoting the conduct based on "the dominant and compelling role of social identity."[249] National identity is community-based identity and is a form of social identity, as in being a member of a club, distinct from another club. As a textbook on political psychology informs us, everyone classifies themselves and everyone else into groups: *in-groups* are the groups we belong to, and *out-groups* are those we do not belong to.[250] One of the classic authors in this field, Henri Tajfel defined social identity as "that part of an individual's self-concept which derives from his [her] knowledge of his [her] membership in a social group (groups) together with the value and emotional significance attached to that membership".[251] The difference with regard to national identity vs. generic political identity or another type of membership is that political identity or membership of a sports club is a matter of choice, while national identity is a matter of chance. Just like Montesquieu, we *happen* to have been born *as something* — to be a holder of a passport of a certain country. And just like Montesquieu, we could decide to rise above it, to choose differently, based on a reasoned explanation, which is that *chance* is not a good basis for deciding on a course of action. In some respects, it is the opposite of

247 Sen, 2006.
248 Sen, 2006, 19.
249 Sen, 2006, 33.
250 Martha L. Cottam, Beth Dietz-Uhler, Elena Mastors, Thomas Preston, *Introduction to Political Psychology* (New York and Hove: Psychology Press, 2010), 47.
251 Quoted in Cottam, Dietz-Uhler, Mastors, Preston, 2010, 48.

choice. Yet, this is what people in general **choose** to do. Many people, in fact, consider their nationality as their most defining feature.

The evaluation exercise between in-groups and out-groups of different nations has been going on since *ethnies* and nations were *imagined*, *invented*, and *constructed*. And one of the most disturbing ideas that can be presented to a nationalist — who we define here as a proponent of the belief that a person's national belonging is their dominant, or even their only identity, and as such directs their conduct — would be that their national identity is *imagined*, i*nvented*, and *constructed*, i.e. that it is not *natural*. In *Inventing Traditions*, describing the role that historians play in solidifying invented and constructed traditions, especially in relation to nations, Hobsbawm considers nationalism and all its surrounding "phenomena" as being based on "exercises in social engineering".[252] To Hobsbawm, not only are nations and national symbols and national languages designed, but they are also recent, and he ironically notes that while all of modern nations claim to be ancient and natural they are all, in fact, recent and constructed.[253] For Richard Handler, the whole concept of *identity* is questionable, just like tradition or culture, and yet the concept persists in usage more freely and attracts less scrutiny than the others.[254] Handler discerns three aspects of identity: personal, collective, and a third which represents a correlation between the two, where the individual and the collective integrate. Yet he finds that the term *identity* is extensively used in keeping with "a globally hegemonic nationalist ideology".[255] In other words, we use identity more frequently in its collective, national aspect than any other. As Handler explains, the dominant aspect of identity is rooted in the idea that "nations are imagined as **natural** objects or things in the real world"[256] [emphasis mine]. And further, "nationalists believe profoundly in the uniqueness of their cultural identity. They also believe that the boundaries they construct to define that identity are

252 Hobsbawm and Ranger, 1983, 13.
253 Hobsbwam and Ranger, 1983, 14.
254 Richard Handler, "Is identity a useful cross-cultural concept?" in Gillis, 1996, 27.
255 Handler, in Gillis, 1996, 28.
256 Handler, in Gillis, 1996, 29.

naturally given and not a symbolic construction of their own devising."[257] Anderson tackles this idea of the nation as being *natural*, such as national ties being experienced as natural ties, stressing the lack of choice as a factor in making the nation of a higher value: "In everything natural there is always something unchosen."[258] It appears that Montesquieu, for whom the pure chance of having been born a Frenchman meant that he would not place the value of that identity higher than that of belonging to humanity, was an exception rather than the rule.

In his essay "Against Identity",[259] Leon Wieseltier examines a number of reasons why identity should be closely scrutinised and generally mistrusted. For Wieseltier, identity is a mask, a sham, and a slogan, rather than substance. It hides rather than reveals, it has replaced individuality. In his view it is an affiliation which is "a surrogate for experience". It is used to advertise, or to pretend. Wieseltier speaks against identity also because it is accidental, and therefore not achieved, and as he put it: "Circumstance is a poor reason to love."[260] Nevertheless, it appears that chance and perceived *naturalness* of community-based identity is appealing. Anderson uncovers another layer of attraction to the coincidental and *natural* ties that come with having been — accidentally — born as belonging to a certain nation: "precisely because such ties are not chosen, they have about them a halo of **disinterestedness**."[261] [emphasis mine] Anderson introduces the idea of fatality into the equation: yes, we were born as such by chance, and we follow the destiny of the nation even if it means that we have to die for it.[262] As Anderson views it, "the idea of ultimate sacrifice comes only with an idea of purity, through fatality."[263]

257 Handler, in Gillis, 1996, 30.
258 Anderson, 1991, 143.
259 Leon Wieseltier, "Against Identity", *The New Republic,* 27 November 1994 https://newrepublic.com/article/92857/against-identity (accessed April 18, 2016).
260 Wieseltier, 1994.
261 Anderson, 1991, 143.
262 Language and religion are crucial for constructing national belonging, but the examination of their role is outside the scope of the thesis.
263 Anderson, 1991, 144.

This idea of nation as destiny to be followed blindly — just because *it is* — is problematic to deconstruct. Belonging to it is an accident, yet it controls people's lives — and deaths — unless they *choose* to opt out of the bind. Anderson rationalises the logic, if we can call it that, behind the "ultimate sacrifice" one would make for one's country, by saying that it is perceived as carrying "moral grandeur which dying for the Labour party, the American Medical Association, or perhaps even Amnesty International cannot rival, for these are bodies that one can join or leave at easy will." We know that this is true without immediately understanding why. Earlier in his study Anderson also asks a rhetorical question: "Who will willingly die for Comecon or the EEC?"[264] — rather than being a question of choice, his point is also that people do not have *natural ties* with bureaucratic bodies that they feel with nations. He adds that although this "aura of fatality" surrounds the concept of belonging to a nation or, as he puts it, "nationalness", it is "fatality embedded in history."[265] In other words, we should understand that this elevates "nationalness" to the level of destiny. Having been placed in a nation for a reason unknown to us, by something far more powerful than we are, and because we want to be part of something greater, or superior, like history, we accept this mission impossible. Would it be stretching Anderson's hypothesis too far to say that many people are willing to throw their lot in with the nation they got attached to by the accident of birth because they believe that history has meaning and direction which gives purpose to the nation, and to them as its agents? This would represent an ultimately Hegelian belief in the Spirit of History — "whatever [Man] does, he is the creature within

264 Anderson, 1991, 53. In 1989, Jacques Delors said "You cannot fall in love with the Single Market". Jacques Delors, address given to the European Parliament 17 January 1989 https://www.cvce.eu/content/publication/2003/8/22/b9c06b95-db97-4774-a700-e8aea5172233/publishable_en.pdf (accessed January 20, 2019).

265 Anderson, 1991, 145.

which the Spirit works."[266] If history has direction, and being a member of a particular nation ensures our participation in history, this gives our existence purpose and value. And this value is to be found in identity. Aleida Assmann explains how adopting the "we" of the group means identifying with the constructed identity, which is defined in the political psychology theory as a "common-identity group."[267] Assmann adds that to be *included* in the in-group we need to know its past, i.e. learn its history.[268] This brings us back to *memory* of the common past, which as previously mentioned, Assmann exposes as having being learnt, not remembered. National identity is *inborn* yet coincidental, imbued with *memory*, which is actually absorbed information.

Anthony Smith's exploration of national identity is motivated by a multitude of contradictory aspects and inconsistencies in the concept of national identity: "In the name of *national identity* people have allegedly been willing to surrender their own liberties and curtail those of others. They have been prepared to trample on the civil and religious rights of ethnic, racial and religious minorities whom the nation could not absorb."[269] This represents only the beginning of Smith's charge sheet, the rest being "confusion, instability, strife, and terror". Although Smith also lists beneficial effects of nationalism, such as preservation of cultures, encouragement to challenge dictatorships, and others, they tend to ring hollow in the face of the 21th-century revival of populism and rise of the extreme right. Nationalism as an aggressive assertion of national identity is seen as essentially destructive.

266 Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *Reason in History, a general Introduction to the Philosophy of History*, translated by Robert S. Hartman (A Liberal Arts Press Book, The Bobbs-Merrill Company Inc. 1953) https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/hegel/works/hi/introduction.htm (accessed March 15, 2019); also see Anderson, 1991, 144. Anderson points out that "Marxist interpretations of history are felt (rather than intellected) as representations of ineluctable necessity", adding that "revolutionary movements also benefited from the appearance of disinterestedness".

267 Cottam, Dietz-Uhler, Mastors, Preston, 2010, 66.

268 Assmann, in Tilmans, van Vree and Winter, 2010, 37.

269 Smith, 1991, 17.

Following the end of the Cold War, after history and memory had to be re-evaluated, identity followed suit, as people from recently transformed countries asked themselves the question: "If we are no longer this, then who are we?". David Lowenthal, calls this change "the growth of concern about identity" which he sees as having spread throughout the world.[270] He sees cultures that had hitherto not been interested in their *heritage* have adopted the Western concept of identity. Lowenthal has little positive to say about the trappings of national identity and its toxic relationship to the past. For Lowenthal, national identity is characterised by the belief in exceptionality, in being superior, and in having inimitable history and heritage: "*our* past is unlike anyone else's. Its uniqueness vaunts our own superiority."[271] It is a reaffirmation exercise which is devoid of curiosity since people are not interested in learning about other cultures and their heritage. The memory boom mentioned earlier was mostly about local and national interests, the Bretons were interested in Bretons, the French were interested in the French, the British in the British and so on. There is no cross-pollination or enrichment through *communication with otherness* in the revival of memory, history, and identity. Lowenthal considers this an indictment of national self-importance: "Other collectivities each have their own special identities, valued for their unique attributes; but they are all similarly deficient in being **unlike** us. Our identity and its expression in our heritage are **real**, **authentic**, unselfconscious; those of others — to the extent that we know them at all — strike us as partial, pastiche, **contrived**."[272] [emphasis mine] For Lowenthal, there is no doubt that the unearnt pride of national belonging encourages division, isolation, and ignorance.

There are many reasoned and rational arguments against communitarian thinking and nationalism in general. The power exerted by national identity and national belonging is a subject of continuous enquiry with researchers attempting to understand the allure of nationalism

270 Lowenthal, in Gillis, 1996, 45.
271 Lowenthal, in Gillis, 1996, 47.
272 Lowenthal, in Gillis, 1996, 48.

through case studies and investigations of national pasts. One such project is Michael Ignatieff's examination of "new nationalism" as he calls it in his book, *Blood and Belonging*.[273] Ignatieff notes that there is no understandable reason why national identity has such pull, nor why nationalism would necessarily lead to the use of violence. He makes a distinction between civic nationalism vs ethnic nationalism, the former being "necessarily democratic", with people-based sovereignty, regardless of people's ethnicity, race etc. The latter is the nationalism that concerns us, belief that "an individual's deepest attachments are inherited, not chosen."[274] Ignatieff explains the rise of ethnic nationalism in the wake of the end of the Cold War and the dissolution of the Soviet bloc as a reaction to uncertainty of the new political and economic situation in many countries in Eastern Europe. Without any practice of democratic and peaceful conflict resolution for over 40 years, when ethnic tensions arose and communities felt at risk, the response to the question "who to trust" was provided by ethnic nationalism: "only trust those of your own blood".[275] In his example of Serbs and Croats, Ignatieff is of the opinion that we should shun easy explanations given so often about the animosity between Serbs and Croats, diagnosed as being "so rooted in history that they were bound to explode in nationalist violence." Ignatieff is convinced that the people who had lived together peacefully for many decades had to be "transformed from neighbours into enemies". For a start, when a country is threatened by civil strife the fear is overwhelming: "when people are sufficiently afraid, they will do anything".[276] Ignatieff drives to the heart of ethnic nationalism by analysing the emotional reasons of its appeal. He points to the manipulative process to make the ethnic conflict a *casus belli* — engineered by the "surviving communist elites", starting with Serbia, which exploited "nationalist emotions in order to cling to power".[277] This process will be explored further in part 5 of the chapter.

273 Michael Ignatieff, *Blood and Belonging. Journeys into New Nationalism* (London: Vintage, 1994).
274 Ignatieff, 1994, 5.
275 Ignatieff, 1994, 6.
276 Ignatieff, 1994, 16.
277 Ignatieff, 1994, 17.

We have seen so far how national identity is perceived as chance, destiny, fate, belonging, emotional attachment. In his article "Parameters of a national biography",[278] Felix Berenskoetter examines the concept of the nation state as rooted in a narrative both serving a meaningful past and a meaningful future. This narrative is supposed to supply a national community with a master narrative, "which guides and legitimizes courses of action and provides ontological security". As Berenskoetter explains, there is no unique narrative that directs actions and gives them meaning. The master narrative runs in parallel with several others that may be derived from it without challenging it. For him the maintenance of such a narrative or "a network of narratives, is a form of **governance**".[279] [emphasis mine] In grossly simplified terms, people are ruled by being told stories. The next part of the chapter will examine the relevance of such stories giving meaning to national belonging.

3. Usable Pasts and Their Functions

> "If the conflicts of the present seemed intractable, the past offered a screen on which desires for unity and continuity, that is, identity, could be projected."[280]

Knowing and understanding the past is essential because it largely determines how people see themselves in the present.[281] Stories from the past are influenced by the present circumstances with political framing dependant on the opportunism of politicians. For Norman Davies, instrumentalisation of history for political reasons is nothing new.[282] Historians, as opposed to politicians, are held to much higher

278 Felix Berenskoetter, "Parameters of a national biography". *European Journal of International Relations* (Vol. 20(1) (2014): 262-288).
279 Berenskoetter, 2014, 279.
280 Gillis, 1996, 9.
281 Minarova Banjac, 2018, 9.
282 Norman Davies, *Europe East and West* (London: Pimlico, 2007), 249.

standards but Davies believes that "complete objectivity is unattainable".[283] Nevertheless, a historian's task is "to distinguish clearly between uncontested facts and contestable opinions."[284] In his book, *Europe East and West*, Davies gives examples of fellow historians who had political affiliations and held strong political opinions while writing and teaching history. Having been present at the historical event itself is no guarantee of objectivity either — as Donald Kagan observed,[285] both Thucydides's account of the Peloponnesian War, and Churchill's account of the Second World War have to be taken with some reservations as both were participants in those wars. Historians have to recognise their own bias but "the search for absolute truth can never end."[286]

People who are not historians might not be so concerned about the absolute truth and rarely question the *truths* in popular history. For many, what they believe happened in the past is a filter through which they look at present reality. The "we" that Aleida Assmann was concerned with, that "we" extends beyond here and now, and includes *our* ancestors and the *remembered* stories of events they have reportedly been through. Myths and tales of uncertain historical value that belong to the so-called *popular history* that connect to the present carry more weight than professional history. The complexity of myth as a concept also lies in the assertion that "myths need not be believed to retain their value and function successfully."[287] For Anthony Smith, shared "common myths and historical memories" are part of the conditions for the existence of the nation and national identity.[288] Smith accepts the concept of *mythomoteur* — a constitutive political myth as one of the factors that influence the establishment of a nation.[289] This type of myth can belong

283 Davies, 2007, 251.
284 Davies, 2007, 252.
285 Donald Kagan, *The Peloponnesian War* (London: Harper Perennial, 2005), XXIV.
286 Davies, 2007, 251-252.
287 Agita Misāne and Aija Priedīte "National Mythology in the history of ideas in Latvia: A view from religious studies", in Geoffrey Hosking and George Schöpflin, eds. *Myths and Nationhood* (London: Hurst & Company, 1997), 160.
288 Smith, 1991, 14.
289 Smith, 2000, 71.

to the remote past, such as the 1389 Kosovo Battle for Serbs, or have their origin in more recent events, such as the First World War for Flemish nationalists.[290] In her anthropological discussion on the definition of myth, Joanna Overing maintains that the term itself is loaded, carrying the bias of the Ancient Greek viewpoint opposing myth — *muthos* as absurd fiction, to *logos* as reasoned discourse.[291] Yet, myths have their internal rationale that should not be underestimated, which is entwined with shared history and identity — imagined, invented, and constructed. Since people and nations are guided by myths, they have to be analysed and interpreted rather than rejected. George Schöplin categorises myths into different groups: "myths of territory", "myths of redemption and suffering", "myths of unjust treatment", "myths of election and civilizing missions", "myths of military valour", "myths of rebirth and renewal" closely connected to the "myths of foundation", "myths of ethnogenesis and antiquity", and "myths of kinship and shared descent".[292] Even if they exist in different versions, or have contradictory elements, myths represent the *truths* that make sense to their audience. The myths are familiar and the truths self-evident, made all the more so by frequent repetitions in oral traditions, through printed narratives, all the way to modern screen adaptations. Since one of the functions of the myth is to make the world understandable for the individual in the group, the shared narrative has a unifying purpose to provide everyone with a set of values and symbols to distinguish them from other groups. Susan-Mary Grant demonstrated this concept in her deconstruction of the myth of American nationhood.[293] America needed myths "for national stability".[294] Contrary to *popular history* the participation in both the Revolution and the Civil

290 Bruno de Wever, "The Flemish Movement and Flemish Nationalism: Instruments, Historiography and Debates", *Studies on National Movements 1* (2013), 62-64; Bruno De Wever, "The First World War as Mythomoteur of Anti-Belgian Flemish Nationalism", lecture at the TEAW? Conference, August 2018, Ypres.

291 Joanna Overing, "The role of myth: an anthropological perspective, or 'the reality of the really made-up'" in Hosking and Schöpflin, 1997, 2.

292 George Schöpflin, "The functions of myth and a taxonomy of myths", in Hosking and Schöplfin, 28-34.

293 Susan-Mary Grant, "Making History: Myth and the Construction of American Nationhood", in Hosking and Schöpflin, 1997, 88-106.

294 Grant, in Hosking and Schöpflin, 1997, 95.

war was "haphazard",[295] while the actions of the British government that incited the Revolution are downplayed so that American exceptionalism is vaunted as the driving force of the establishment of the American Republic.[296] George Washington had to become a mythical heroic figure, for everyone to believe that the true struggle was about a new nation being born and not about a disgruntled colony's taxes.[297] National myths are efficient communication tools,[298] also because everyone in the group is familiar with the mythological narrative and "fragmentary references are enough".[299] Insiders do not need more. Historians, as much as they try, can never effectively dismantle inaccurate accounts from popular memory precisely because myths stick to nations like barnacles. Is it a historian's task to debunk the myths and set the misguided right? For Davies, myths are "part of the mental framework of any age"[300] and historians must study them, examine them for meaning and values, but dismissing them would "mutilate the past in a totally unacceptable way".[301]

Myths are perfect *usable pasts* and the way they are deployed depends on the current concerns of national leaders, they are adaptable according to the situation, and they can be mined for usable content.[302] One of the most widespread myths that recurs as a usable past is the ancient myth of the *Golden Age*.[303] The golden age that the Greek poet Hesiod (cca. 750 – 650 B.C.E.) imagined in his poem, "Works and Days" describes a time when food was plentiful and people lived in blissful peace, alongside Gods. It ended with the arrival of Zeus who overthrew Chronos and ushered in the Silver Age.[304] But Hesiod's concept continued to thrive and became a symbol of an idyllic time that is gone but not forgotten.

295 Grant, in Hosking and Schöpflin, 1997, 93.
296 Grant, in Hosking and Schöpflin, 1997, 92.
297 Grant, in Hosking and Schöpflin, 1997, 93.
298 Schöpflin, in Hosking and Schöpflin, 1997, 24.
299 Misāne and Priedīte, in Hosking and Schöpflin, 1997, 159.
300 Davies, 2007, 263.
301 Davies, 2007, 264.
302 Anthony Smith, "The 'Golden Age' and National Renewal", in Hosking and Schöpflin, 1997, 38.
303 Smith, in Hosking and Schöpflin, 1997, 40.
304 H. C. Baldry "Who Invented the Golden Age?", *The Classical Quarterly* Vol. 2, No. 1/2 (Jan. — Apr. 1952), pp. 83-92.

For Renaissance Europe, the main reference for the golden age was Pericles's Athens and Imperial Rome.[305] Throughout European cultural development, particularly during Romanticism, *new* ancient civilisations were being discovered and studied, becoming attractive through certain aspects of those cultures. As Anthony Smith explains, at the beginning of the 20th century "the net of *antiquity* had been extended to all pre-medieval civilizations".[306] Gradually, economic progress, modernisation, social changes and increased automatization of daily life led to the disappearance of *traditional* ways of life. Significant social changes tend to cause yearning for the past and *simpler days*. The present does not look good in comparison with the collage of an imaginary past. Regardless of what the past was really like, "retrospective mirage" means that it is remembered as better than it was, particularly in times of uncertainty. Similar themes can be found in the concept of golden age across the world such as, integrity, piety, creativity, prosperity, authority.[307] It could be said that at any point, an appropriate golden age theme lies dormant, ready to be resurrected in times of upheaval, almost as some type of golden age feature *à la carte*. Whenever necessary, the mirror of the golden age can be held up to the people with a message that this is who they really are, rousing them to *remember* the past, to rediscover their *authentic self*, recover what is lost.[308]

On 7 November 1941, Stalin made a speech at the anniversary of the October Revolution, held as Nazi Germany troops, tanks, and aircraft were hurtling towards Moscow sowing death and destruction. To inspire the nation to resist the Nazi invaders, Stalin invoked the heroes of Russia's past, those who had repelled foreign invaders: "Let the manly images of our great ancestors — Alexander Nevsky, Dimitry Donskoy, Kuzma Minin, Dimitry Pozharsky, Alexander Suvorov and Mikhail Kutuzov —

305 Smith, in Hosking and Schöpflin, 1997, 39.
306 Smith, in Hosking and Schöpflin, 1997, 40.
307 Smith, in Hosking and Schöpflin, 1997, 48.
308 It is no coincidence that two populist slogans in the 21st century refer to the 'loss' that can be regained: "Make America Great **Again**" (US) and "Take **Back** Control" (UK) [emphasis mine].

inspire you in this war! May the victorious banner of the great Lenin be your lodestar!"[309] Alongside Alexander Nevsky, a prince of Kievan Rus' from the 13th century, Prince Dimitry Donskoy of the 14th century, Kuzma Minin and Dimitry Pozharsky from the 17th century, Field Marshal Alexander Suvorov from the 18th century and Field Marshal Mikhail Kutuzov from the 19th century, one almost feels that "the great Lenin" is the interloper. Plenty of irony is also to be found in the fact that all the historical role models are religious and aristocratic figures being extolled by the leader of the first communist country. As Margalit points out, we need to differentiate here "between the illusion *of a* collective memory and illusions *within* the collective memory."[310] In other words, just because of Stalin's references, we should not be drawing conclusions about *collective memory*. Nevertheless, these "illusions *within*" had been reinforced by Sergey Eisenstein's 1938 film *Alexander Nevsky* which would have been fresh in Russian minds in 1941.[311] This is a political use of the past *par excellence*. Relying on Schöpflin's taxonomy of myths, we can see that this example assembles many of them: *myths of territory*, *military valour*, *rebirth and renewal*, *foundation*, as well as *kinship* and *shared descent*. Through the historical references, familiar to all, Stalin was establishing *continuity*, affirming that the heroes of the past were really the same people he was addressing, defending the same country for the same values, and that they would triumph *again* in the present war just as they have triumphed in the past.

Golden age functions are multiple — establishing continuity with the present, reinforcing the legitimacy of current leaders, offering the prospect of "imminent status reversal", returning to the glorious days of the past, and reminding the people of "past greatness" and "inner worth".[312] One other important function that Smith explores is that the

309 J.V. Stalin, "Speech at the Red Army Parade on the Red Square, Moscow", 7 November 1941 https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/stalin/works/1941/11/07.htm (accessed January 18, 2019).

310 Margalit, 2002, 99.

311 Stalin supported the making of the film, see Cohen, 2014, 169.

312 Smith, in Hosking and Schöpflin, 1997, 50.

golden age represents "a quest for authenticity", where the ultimate goal of the golden age is reaching an archetype of the authentic self.[313] By using the golden age, the political elite can project the *imagined, invented,* and *constructed true self* as the objective for the nation. The concept of a nation's *true self,* used as a goal to which *the-now-in-trouble-wayward-nation* must return, is the bread and butter of nationalist and populist discourse and one of the most divisive functions of the golden age.[314] The *authentic self* is imagined as having been at its peak in the course of the chosen golden age. *Returning* to that model for inspiration is therefore encouraged when hard times arise, both as motivation for reversal of the situation and as a distraction in times of political conflict.

Historical defeats and tragedies provide suitable and usable models and may cast even longer shadows on popular memory than the golden age. Cohen examines the Kosovo Battle, an account of which was given in the introduction, which is considered by the Serbs as representing the start of the Ottoman domination in the Balkans. Although the battle of Kosovo may have been more of a draw, and the nominally Serbian armies consisted of a variety of mixed ethnic groups, including Albanians, it was the story of the Serbian defeat against the Muslim invaders that was preserved by the Orthodox Church as the main vessel of the Serbian communal memory under the Ottoman occupation. Consequently, the Kosovo story became infused with Christian symbolism and was transmitted as such.[315] The myth opposes the two sides very strongly — *us vs. them* — the heroes and believers who are Serbs, against the Turks — who are the *other,* the unchristian enemy. As various Albanian and other non-Christian populations migrated in and out of Kosovo — also under pressure from the expanding Serbian nation state, the *other* gradually became Albanian.

313 Smith, in Hosking and Schöpflin, 1997, 48.

314 An obvious contemporary example of the 'authentic self' mirage is related to the Brexit narrative, directly connected to the imagined golden age of the British Raj, see Pankaj Mishra "The Malign Incompetence of the British Ruling Class", *The New York Times*, 17 January 2019 https://www.nytimes.com/2019/01/17/opinion/sunday/brexit-ireland-empire.html (accessed January 20, 2019).

315 Cohen, 2014, 34-38.

Slobodan Milošević used the cult of Kosovo as the *mythomoteur* of Serbian nationalism to strengthen the support of the Serbian population and the Serbian intellectual elite for his divisive strategy which quickly led to a disintegration of the multi-ethnic Yugoslavia in civil wars. The Kosovo narrative of a choice between heavenly and earthly kingdom, defence of ancestral lands, and not being a "Vuk Branković", i.e. a traitor, is still used by the current regime to bolster legitimacy and frame the political debate in the face of acute political tensions with the former Serbian province. Using Shöpflin's taxonomy of myth,[316] we can see that all his categories of myths are represented in the Kosovo cult which makes it remarkably resistant to reality.

The story of the ancient Jewish fort of Masada and its defenders who committed mass suicide so as not to be overcome by Roman troops became part of the Jewish national consciousness almost two thousand years after the event. Flavius Josephus's *The Jewish War*[317] is the only known source of the story. The *Sicarii*, a group of Jewish insurgents against Rome, controlled the Masada fort in the eastern part of the Judean Desert, from where they carried out raids against Romans but also against other Jews, killing them and looting their provisions.[318] As the Roman troops were about to take the fortification, ten men put everyone to death, then one man killed the rest and finally himself. This is how 960 people died, either killed by their fellow Sicarii or by suicide. According to the account, a handful of survivors had managed to hide and were able to tell the Romans what happened. *The Jewish War*, including the Masada story, lay forgotten for many centuries and resurfaced as the first Zionists and settlers in Palestine became interested in the early Jewish history, after the modern Hebrew translation was published in 1923. At the time, harsh new life in Palestine awaited the Jews who had emigrated from Eastern Europe or Germany, with about 30% of all settlers leaving again, many

316 Myths of territory, redemption and suffering, unjust treatment, election and civilizing millions, military valour, rebirth and renewal, foundation, ethnogenesis and antiquity, kinship and shared descent, in Hosking and Schöpflin, 1997, 28-34.

317 Cohen, 2014, 34

318 Cohen, 2014, 36.

returning to their original country.[319] Yitzhak Lamdan, originally from the Ukraine, published the poem *Masada* in 1927 evoking the defiance of Jews against their history and fate, and using the narrative to parallel the situation of Jewish settlers in Palestine, with Masada as a metaphor for Palestine. Lamdan's poem became popular through its articulation of the settlers' situation giving sense to their suffering. The meaning of the myth and its resonance changed as circumstances of Jews in Palestine changed. In the 1930s, with the rise of Arab nationalism, when Jewish settlers felt threatened, they took to focusing particularly on the more encouraging line "never again shall Masada fall".[320] The rise of Nazism in Europe and the subsequent horrors of the Holocaust, and consequently the existential threats facing Israel ensured the persistence of the Masada myth. Over time, the myth underwent significant changes, with the Sicarii becoming freedom fighters, rather than insurgents who had killed fellow Jews for provisions. The myth carried on that they had died weapons in hand, not by their own hand, but fighting the Romans.[321] The story from the past was adapted according to the needs of the present. Although the Masada myth no longer has a hold over the Jewish national consciousness as it used to, it remains important as a site of memory[322] and a story that every Israeli knows.

Paul Cohen also examines the story of Jeanne d'Arc, which dates back to the Hundred Years' War. During the period of English military dominance, in 1420, the French were forced to accept an English king, and then the regent. These were hard times for France, full of political instability and raiding soldiers in the countryside, both English and French. It was at this time that a 13-year-old young girl from Domrémy in Lorraine, Jeanne, started hearing voices, which she understood to be the archangel Michael, who over the next few years gave her instructions to lead French armies into battle to return the king of France to the French throne. Jeanne obeyed

319 Cohen, 2014, 43.
320 Cohen, 2014, 47.
321 Cohen, 2014, 54.
322 *Masada museum* https://levyfoundation.org/masada-museum/ (accessed January 20, 2019).

the voices, gradually acquired a following, was given an army to lead which lifted the siege of the city of Orléans. She even ensured that Charles VII was reinstated as the king of France in Reims. After her successes, her status as a God-sent maiden from a popular prophecy that was circulating at the time, was established. However, she was eventually captured and charged with treason and witchcraft. Jeanne d'Arc was tried in Rouen and burnt at the stake. Once the English were defeated, the proceedings that had excommunicated her and found her guilty of "crimes of divine treason" were nullified. The story of Jeanne d'Arc was revived when Napoleon became interested in her image as a symbol of French unity. She was declared a saint in 1920.[323]

In France, during the Second World War, both the Vichy government and the Resistance considered Jeanne d'Arc a symbol of their respective causes. The collaborationist government appropriated the image of Jeanne to use in support of Maréchal Pétain, equating her ideals with his, with both being praised as saviours of France.[324] Although Jeanne had been a virgin who led an army dressed in men's clothes, it was common to see Vichy propaganda showing her in a dress, patriotic and maternal.[325] For this purpose, her image was demilitarised and de-androgenised, she was portrayed surrounded by children. At the same time, General De Gaulle as the leader of the Free French in exile used the imagery of Jeanne in his radio messages. Jeanne was a symbol of the resistance, a woman who helped liberate France from the enemy in the 15th century. However, her story and the message it conveyed were no longer needed after the Normandy landings.[326] Although the image of Jeanne d'Arc is "visually omnipresent in today's France" as Cohen put it, it ceased to be relevant as a symbol, except when it featured in the anti-immigration propaganda of the *Front national*.[327] Still, in May every year, *les fêtes johanniques*, an

323 Cohen, 2014, 113-127.
324 Cohen, 2014, 131-132.
325 Cohen, 2014, 132-133.
326 Cohen, 2014, 141. Since the invader in the original story was from England, the myth no longer fitted.
327 Cohen, 2014, 146.

annual festival in her honour, are held in Reims and in Orléans. In 2018, Marine le Pen, the leader of the latest iteration of the National Front, the *Rassemblement national*, expressed her support for a young Franco-Beninese woman who had been selected to represent Jeanne d'Arc at the festival in Orléans.[328] We can observe that the practice of instrumentalising the story of Jeanne d'Arc for political purposes is not quite over.

The three stories have elements in common; there are historical facts supporting part of the narrative with historical uncertainty. All three stories were revived several centuries after the events had taken place, and used for political purposes in different times. Moreover, the resurrected stories were recycled with some parts edited, *forgotten,* or expunged. The Kosovo battle was not truly crucial and the Serbian Army was not all Serbian,[329] the Masada defenders were actually terrorists who had killed fellow Jews, and Jeanne d'Arc was captured by the Burgundians who had sided with the English and she was tried by a French clerical court. Told in this way, the stories are not *useful*. In order to be usable, they have to be adapted over and over again. Repeating them over the years in their adapted forms has ensured that they run deep in the popular historical consciousness, with revisions being resisted and rejected. Representations of the *useful* Kosovo narrative among Serbs are strong, still impacting on lasting political settlement in the region, Masada's defenders are remembered as *Jewish Rebels* in the Masada museum, and Joan of Arc is present in art and imagery throughout France, and can be invoked, if an opportunity arises.

328 The young woman had received abuse on social media, "Ce sont des valeurs de patriotisme, des valeurs d'engagement, des valeurs de foi. La jeune fille choisie répond évidemment à tous les critères et ceci n'a rien à voir avec la couleur de la peau." *Valeurs actuelles*, 25 February 2018 https://www.valeursactuelles.com/societe/marine-le-pen-defend-la-jeanne-darc-2018-93532 (accessed May 20, 2018). This could be interpreted as Marine le Pen further distancing herself from the racist and anti-Semitic rhetoric of her father who had led *le Front National* prior to her taking it over, renaming and rebranding it.

329 From Milošević's speech in 1989: "Today, it is difficult to say what is historically true in the Kosovo Battle and what is legend. Today, this does not matter anymore."

4. Memorialisation and its Discontents

"Moi, mon colon, celle que j'préfère
C'est la guerre de quatorz'-dix-huit"[330]

When the French singer-songwriter Georges Brassens's song "La guerre de 14 – 18" came out in 1961, he came under criticism for seemingly mocking those who had served in the First World War.[331] It was, in fact, an ironic song which seemed to *praise* the First World War as the author's *favourite war,* going on to list all the others, from those described by Homer, to the Spartan wars, the Napoleonic wars, the 1870 war, and to the Second World War, as not being quite up to the level of the 14 – 18 war. Of course, it was an anti-war song, as he briefly explained to a television audience 17 years later.[332] The song was alluding to the Algerian war — which the French government had never called a war — that was ongoing at the time and would end a year later: A verse in the song, *"Guerres saintes, guerres sournoises, qui n'osent pas dire leurs noms"*, was a clear reference to the war in Algeria.[333] This was satire at its purest that some of his listeners got wrong. As Brassens reiterates in his television interview, the First World War was a *popular war* also because so many people had served in it.[334] His song satirises the popularity of the First World War as the *good* war — France had won, which was not the case in 1870, or in 1940. In 1961, France was losing in Algeria but not talking about it and not calling it a war. Of course, this is the point. The French *love* the Great War — just like the Serbs. Even though the First World War is also the terrible war that cost many millions of lives and remains the most visible war in public

330 George Brassens "La guerre de 14 – 18", *YouTube*, 1961, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=l2F5qaHzkj0 (accessed May 15, 2018); Winter, Remembering War, 2006, 43.

331 "Brassens la guerre da 14 – 18", *lhistgeobox*, 1 January 2014 http://lhistgeobox.blogspot.com/2014/01/brassens-la-guerre-de-14-18.html (accessed January 20, 2019).

332 « Georges Brassens parle de sa chanson sur la guerre de 14-18 », *Institut national de l'audiovisuel*, 18 December 1978 https://www.ina.fr/video/I04076281 (accessed January 15, 2019).

333 The French government called the Algerian War *opération de sécurité et de maintien de l'ordre*. The word *war* was not used.

334 Brassens recalls an anecdote from his town of Sète where people would say to each other: *"T'as pas fait la guerre de 14? Dépêche-toi de la faire!"*

spaces — having resulted in a vast number of war graves, monuments, and memorials.[335]

The 1914 – 1918 war became known as the Great War and would become the First World War only after it was exceeded in the horror and casualties by the following one. The Great War transformed the international order in Europe, exploded four empires, and created a traumatic burden of emptiness in the communities around Europe. With around 40 million casualties, 20 million dead and around 21 million wounded,[336] there were more dead and more left mourning than ever before. Already in the course of the war, as new weapons added to the dehumanisation of warfare, soldiers on all sides became sceptical as to the ultimate goal of the continued killings. This resulted in a concerted effort of military and civilian authorities to use the unparalleled lists of casualties for propaganda purposes, and this requirement changed the way the dead were *treated*, as G. Kurt Piehler explains in his essay "The War Dead and the Gold Star: American Commemoration of the First World War".[337] Until the Great War, soldiers killed in battle were buried near the battlefields without much ceremony. One other important innovation of the war was that names of soldiers started to matter. In many previous wars, the names of generals mattered more than those of ordinary soldiers — but that changed with the Great War.[338] It was ironic that the soldiers of the Great War became almost more important *after* they died, their great numbers necessitating the establishment of war graves commissions in almost all the combatant countries.[339] Already during the war, special war graves commissions were established with regulations issued on the retrieval

335 There are 13,739 registered First World War monuments in France according to *36000 cicatrices: Les monuments aux morts de la Grande guerre*. (Paris: Editions du patrimoine, 2014), 9.

336 "World War I Casualties", *Repères, Partneriat Educatif Grundtvig 2009 –2011* https://www.census.gov/history/pdf/reperes112018.pdf (accessed March 15, 2019).

337 Kurt G. Piehler, "The War Dead and the Gold Star: American Commemoration of the First World War", in Gillis, 1996, 168.

338 Jacques Le Goff, *Histoire et mémoire* (Paris: Gallimard, 1988), 161; Thomas W. Laqueur, *The Work of the Dead — A Cultural History of Mortal Remains* (Princeton N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2015), 389.

339 Piehler, in Gillis, 1996, 168.

of bodies by families.[340] After the war, articles 225 and 226 of the Treaty of Versailles ensured that the graves of the fallen combatants would be respected, memorials erected, bodies returned to home countries whenever possible,[341] and recognised government-appointed associations to deal with graves and memorials. In other words, it was the governments that had full control of the bodies of the fallen soldiers. France did not authorise removal of bodies by families until 1920,[342] although illegal recovery of bodies and reburials were not uncommon.[343] In Britain, the Imperial War Graves Commission was founded in 1917 and was in charge of building military cemeteries and maintaining them.[344] The British government had decided that all those fallen in France would remain in the official cemeteries, regardless of what the families wanted.[345] German military cemeteries often had no individual graves and the dead were memorialised collectively.[346] As Piehler observes, "the war dead were still being pressed into service by their governments".[347] Those left mourning often needed to find their own way to deal with losing their loved ones.

In his seminal study, *Sites of Memory, Sites of Mourning*, Jay Winter explores how "the communities of the bereaved"[348] were learning to come to terms with their loss. With governments unable to answer the question why so many people had to die, it was up to the bereaved to search for the meaning of the Great War through their mourning practices which took many forms.[349] Although war memorials always carried a political message,[350] they were specifically built and used as *sites of mourning*, for

340 Jean-Pascal Soudagne, *L'histoire incroyable du Soldat inconnu* (Rennes: Editions Ouest-France, 2008), 31-36.
341 Treaty of Versailles, 1919, https://www.loc.gov/law/help/us-treaties/bevans/m-ust000002-0043.pdf (accessed February 20, 2017).
342 Soudagne, 2008, 49.
343 Winter, *Sites of Memory, Sites of Mourning* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 26.
344 George L. Mosse, *Fallen Soldiers. Reshaping the Memory of the World Wars* (Oxford/New York: Oxford University Press, 1990), 82.
345 Piehler, in Gillis, 1996, 168.
346 Piehler, in Gillis, 1996, 169.
347 Piehler, in Gillis, 1996, 168.
348 Winter, 2014, 6.
349 Winter, 2014, 78.
350 Winter, 2014, 82.

the bereaved to remember those fallen in the war. The memorials served a purpose, both collective and individual. Looking at the memorials today, it is possible to lose sight of the individual aspect. As Winter put it, many memorials may have changed their meaning in the intervening years,[351] but that does not mean that we should forget that they had served the bereaved. In "Forms of kinship and remembrance in the aftermath of the Great War",[352] Winter uses the term "fictive kinships" to describe how people established relationships united by the war to carry out the "work of remembrance." In most combatant countries, these were associations like the Red Cross, veterans' associations and various religious communities that helped bereaved families deal with the weight of their loss. The war left millions of widows and orphans in its wake, as well as 10 million mutilated veterans. Apart from the administrative and practical help these associations were able to give to the families, what mattered most was that through their communication and presence they were acknowledging the existence of that emptiness, that loss that had been created by the death of son, brother, or father, which the official institutions were not able to do. The fictive kinship groups gave their support to the bereaved not only before official commemorations but also continued after the commemorations were over. As Winter points out, the fictive kinships as "agents of remembrance" and the establishment commemorations would come together on 11 November "but it was not their origin, nor their center of gravity". These "agents of remembrance" worked between the private and public spheres of remembrance, "between families, civil society, and the state."[353] The groups that are formed through the activities of remembrance are "collectives" that always depend on the individuals' initiatives. For Winter, this is "small-scale collective memory" which gradually dissipated as people who were "agents of remembrance" grew older and died. In comparison to the official ceremonies of the Great War,

351 Winter, 2014, 79.

352 Jay Winter "Forms of kinship and remembrance in the aftermath of the Great War", in Jay Winter and Emmanuel Sivan, eds. *War and Remembrance in the Twentieth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 40-60.

353 Winter, in Winter and Sivan, 1999, 59.

these groups were personally invested in the "work of remembrance".[354] While Winter's examination of the remembrance of the Great War mostly relates to Western Europe, it is important to note that the "fictive kinship groups" existed elsewhere and, as we shall see later in the research, some have survived many decades after the war, while others only began their work of remembrance spurred on by the memory boom and the centenary commemorations.

The building of war memorials after the Great War is a significant phenomenon in the sphere of collective remembrance.[355] The memorials represented the official way of symbolising loss and of demonstrating the *responsibility* of the government to remember the fallen and to provide the space for the bereaved to mourn.[356] Winter makes the point that alongside their ritual function, war memorials always had clear political meaning.[357] Today, when there are no bereaved, "political symbolism…. is all we can see".[358] The efforts to find the names of all the soldiers who had fallen in the war were widespread and the names were subsequently inscribed on the memorials. For Britain, two of the most significant memorials are the Menin Gate in Ypres and the Thiepval memorial at the Somme. In his work *Fallen Soldiers — Reshaping the Memory of the World Wars,* George Mosse sees the war memorials as the expressions of "the cult of the fallen", which in turn has to be linked to the self-image of the nation,[359] where those who had died for the nation are *put to work* so that paradoxically the dead make the cult of the nation "come alive".[360] For Mosse,"construction of a war memorial must be put on the same plane as the building of a church",[361] as he recognises nationalism as "civic religion".[362]

354 Winter, in Winter and Sivan, 1999, 59-60; Winter, 2006, 136.
355 Le Goff, 1988, 161.
356 Winter, 2014, 93.
357 Winter, 2014, 82.
358 Winter, 2014, 93.
359 Mosse, 1990, 105.
360 Mosse, 1990, 80.
361 Mosse, 1990, 105.
362 Mosse, 1990, 224.

Another way that the Great War changed remembrance and memorials was the tomb of the unknown soldier. As Jacques Le Goff put it,*"cherchant à repousser les limites de la mémoire associée à l'anonymat, proclamant sur le cadavre sans nom la cohésion de la nation dans la mémoire commune."*[363] The main reason for this new concept was the impossibility of finding and identifying thousands of soldiers owing to the unprecedented use of artillery in the Great War.[364] On 1 July 1916, the day known in history as the first day of the Somme which saw 60,000 British casualties, was also the day the Entente artillery fired 1.5 million shells towards enemy positions, around 30 shells per one square kilometre.[365] Such a war not only killed men, it obliterated them. The tomb of the unknown soldier was invented out of a necessity to create a memorial that would be "remembering everyone by remembering no one in particular"[366] and be a *replacement* for the bodies that were never found or never identified. The idea seemed to have occurred at about the same time in France and in Britain, although the French believe that it came first from François Simon, president of the association *Le souvenir français*[367] in 1916, when it became evident that many French soldiers would never have a resting place. Following extensive Assembly debates as well as wide-ranging discussions in the newspapers as to the possible location of burial of the French unknown soldier, the law was passed in October 1919 to erect "*un monument national commémoratif des héros de la Grande Guerre, tombés au champ d'honneur*".[368] The law still failed to specify where the monument would be, but the decision was made quickly after the British announced that they would be burying the unknown British soldier from a French battlefield in Westminster Abbey.[369] The French unknown soldier was chosen at a ceremony in Verdun, after this the casket was taken to Paris on 11 November 1920. The French unknown soldier was then buried under

363 Le Goff, 1988, 161.
364 Soudagne, 2008, 21-23.
365 Soudagne, 2008, 19.
366 Gillis, 1996, 11.
367 Soudagne, 2008, 53.
368 Soudagne, 2008, 59.
369 Soudagne, 2008, 60.

l'Arc de Triomphe. The day before, after being carried from Calais to Dover on the Royal Navy Destroyer *Verdun*, the British unknown soldier was taken to London, along with several sacks of French soil, as noted by Thomas Laqueur in his detailed study *The Work of the Dead. The Cultural History of Mortal Remains*.[370] As Laqueur observes, the soil was thus transformed "from ordinary to sacred." Another innovation regarding the commemoration of the fallen, was the *Cenotaph*, the empty tomb in Whitehall to memorialise those who were buried elsewhere. According to Laqueur, originally Lloyd George's idea to have a catafalque built for the Victory Parade in July 1919 was not particularly liked by anyone. Sir Edward Lutyens designed it as a temporary monument and no one realised that it would become a symbol. Once it was installed, it was universally embraced by members of the public who started spontaneously to leave wreaths around it.[371] The Cenotaph was designed as a simple monument without any national or Christian symbols, reminiscent of ancient Greece. The Cenotaph became a powerful memorial very quickly, as Jay Winter put it, "It says so much because it says so little."[372] It was decided to make it a permanent monument and the granite version replacing the plaster one was officially inaugurated on 11 November 1920. On that day, the procession of well over a million people following the unknown soldier to Westminster Abbey passed by the Cenotaph where it stopped for a few minutes, after which it continued to Westminster Abbey where the unknown soldier was laid to rest.[373]

The practice of burying an unknown soldier to represent all those who fell in the Great War spread to most of the combatant countries, except for Russia. Italy buried its unknown soldier at the foot of the Capitol in 1921, the US buried its unknown soldier in 1922 at the Arlington military cemetery, Belgium in 1922 at the foot of the *Colonne du Congrès* in Brussels. The same year, Czechoslovakia, Poland, Greece and the Kingdom of

370 Laqueur, 2015, 481.
371 Laqueur, 2015, 482.
372 Winter, 2014, 104.
373 Laqueur, 2014, 481-483.

Serbs, Croats and Slovenes followed suit,[374] while Bulgaria, Romania and Austria did so in 1923. A German unknown soldier was memorialised at Tannenberg in 1926.[375] Originally, Canada, Australia and New Zealand accepted that the unknown soldier in Westminster Abbey also represented their dead.[376] However, Australia decided to bring back one of their unknown soldiers and inter him at the Canberra War Memorial in 1993.[377] Canada brought back their unknown soldier to Ottawa in 2000,[378] and New Zealand to Wellington in 2004.[379]

As in Western Europe, communities in south-east Europe faced vast losses and grief in the wake of the war. The Balkans had started with the conflicts two years before the rest of Europe, with the Balkan wars in 1912 and 1913, while the wider region including Hungary and Romania did not settle until 1920, and Greece and Turkey until 1922. The Great War itself was different from the Western Front. There was trench warfare and mobile warfare, but also occupation, retreat, insurgents' operations, rebellion against the occupation, reprisals. The dead in south-east Europe also included many civilians who had died in atrocities and in epidemics. Typhus epidemics, especially in Romania and Serbia, took many lives. Fallen soldiers were far more readily commemorated and "civilian casualties remained relegated to the margin of public awareness," says Olga Manojlović Pintar in "Bereavement and Mourning in South-east Europe".[380] Those fallen *for* their country seemed more valuable by comparison. Civilian victims were rarely commemorated, and usually more so when they were victims of war crimes, than if they had died of

374 This case will be addressed in chapter IV.

375 Laqueur, 2015, 483.

376 Winter, 2014, 26.

377 "Tomb of the Unknown Australian Soldier", *The Australian War Memorial* https://www.awm.gov.au/visit/visitor-information/features/hall-of-memory/tomb (accessed January 15, 2019).

378 "Tomb of the Unknown Soldier", *Veterans Affairs Canada* http://www.veterans.gc.ca/eng/remembrance/memorials/national-inventory-canadian-memorials/details/9367 (accessed January 20, 2019).

379 "Tomb of the Unknown Warrior", *Ministry for Culture and Heritage* https://mch.govt.nz/pukeahu/park/national-war-memorial/tomb (accessed January 20, 2019).

380 Olga Manojlović Pintar, "Bereavement and Mourning (South-east Europe)" *International Encyclopaedia of the First World War,* 8 October 2014, 2. https://encyclopedia.1914-1918-online.net/article/bereavement_and_mourning_south_east_europe (accessed January 4, 2017, 3/10.

typhus or malnutrition, says Danilo Šarenac in "Commemoration, Cult of the Fallen".[381] The focus of the grief was on the fallen soldiers.[382] The pain of losing fathers, brothers, and sons was compounded by the fact that so many soldiers lost their lives outside their countries and their bodies were either never found or were buried far away from home. This was even more painful in relation to Christian Orthodox beliefs that without a body and a proper burial, the souls of the dead would not be able to pass to the hereafter.[383] Because family members were not able to carry out traditional burial rites, new practices of mourning and remembering had to be created to mark the interrupted and disappeared lives of their loved ones. Manojlović Pintar notes that decorated wooden crosses were erected in churchyards in Romania to symbolise those fallen who could not be buried. In Serbia, one to two-meter-high stone tablets, were erected by the roadside, close to dead soldiers' homes. The fallen soldier's life was inscribed on these stone markers to be read by passers-by.[384] It was an effective way to ensure they would not be forgotten — they still existed because they were remembered and their place in this world was marked. The stone *stelae* had the shape of the cross, or the picture of the soldier painted on them. The name *krajputaši* — meaning "roadsiders" — was given to them in the 1960s.[385] They can still be found in Serbia today.[386]

Spontaneous initiatives to build local monuments to honour the fallen soldiers came from their communities. Local initiative committees were set up to communicate with state authorities for building permission and designs. Such monuments were not only built with funds raised

381 Danilo Šarenac, "Commemoration, Cult of the Fallen (South-east Europe)", *International Encyclopedia of the First World War – 1914-1918 online*. 8 October 2014, 5. https://encyclopedia.1914-1918-online.net/article/commemoration_cult_of_the_fallen_south_east_europe (accessed December 8, 2016), 5/12.

382 Manojlović Pintar, 2014, 3-4/10.

383 Manojlović Pintar, 2014, 4/10.

384 Manojlović Pintar, 2014, 4/10. Inscription on a *krajputaš* from the village of Vrnčani from 1929 said that the fallen soldier "most loved God, church and army,"in Manojlović Pintar, 2014, 130.

385 The same form of monument was chosen in 2014 to commemorate Serbian soldiers who had died in the Netherlands during the Great War, as will be discussed in chapter V.

386 One such "krajputaš" was chosen to be on the front page of the publication "Serbia Remembers First World War", see Jovo Simišić, *Serbia Remembers 100 years –The First World War: 1914-1918*. (Beograd: National Tourism Organisation of Serbia, 2013).

by the community, but the community also maintained them.[387] These private initiatives were ahead of state-sponsored monuments — all Serbian villages had lost fathers, brothers, and sons and they were commemorated close to their homes.[388] The state tried to catch up with large-scale monuments and ceremonies that always had national and patriotic character — but they were far away from the grief of the small communities that had lost their members. Veterans' associations played a vital role in supporting their members, particularly when the state did not. The Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes boasted many different associations. In Serbia alone, there were associations of reserve officers and soldiers, holders of the Albanian memorial medal, French reserve officers in Yugoslavia, associations of holders of different medals, war volunteers, war invalids, veteran defenders of Belgrade, students, soldiers and others.[389] After the Second World War, there would be only one veterans' association, *SUBNOR, Union of veterans' associations of people's liberation wars*, which also included WWI veterans. SUBNOR was in charge of looking after monuments, especially WWII monuments, but also supported some memorialisation projects from WWI.[390]

The new Yugoslav state, the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes had within its new borders former enemies who were now fellow citizens. The newly unified country lost around 1.9 million people in total; 900,000 of whom were soldiers. As Serbia had most casualties in relation to its population in comparison to other belligerent states, any commemoration of the Serbian dead reiterated Serbian national sacrifices for the new country which "presented an obstacle to fully embracing the new Yugoslav identity".[391] Those who had fought on the other side were often presented as having fought unwillingly which was not necessarily true.[392] Although efforts were generally made to have all the citizens participate

387 Manojlović Pintar, 2014, 4/10.
388 Manojlović Pintar, 2014, 4/10.
389 Manojlović Pintar, 2014, 329-330. NB: SUBNOR today relates to wars 1941-1945, 1992, 1999.
390 Lazarevac ossuary church in 1964.
391 Šarenac, 2014, 2/12.
392 Šarenac, 2014, 3/12.

in ceremonies, the fact is that the commemorations of the fallen soldiers from the losing side were not included in the official ceremonies, while their monuments were more often erected in cemeteries rather than in town squares.[393] According to Ljiljana Dobrovšak,[394] the fallen on the losing side in the new kingdom were still memorialised with the same type of monuments: war cemeteries, monuments, gravestones, cenotaphs, ossuaries, and plaques although far fewer were erected with the support of the new state than in Serbia, and with less enthusiasm.[395] One of the reasons that war memorials were built more frequently in cemeteries was that the (Belgrade-based) Ministry of Education's art department had to approve the designs for grander monuments and plaques which made the process slow and bureaucratic.[396]

In 1922, the new law on regulating military cemeteries at home and abroad required the remains in military cemeteries to be placed in ossuaries. To encourage what was seen as a more practical solution, the state began subsidising the construction of ossuaries.[397] The efforts to centralise commemorations resulted in the establishment of an association of non-commissioned officers and soldiers in 1919, which included Serbs who had fought in the war as well as Croats and Slovenes who had deserted from the Austro-Hungarian Army. New Yugoslav NCOs were also able to join which made the association more Yugoslav.[398] This association was involved in a number of monument-building initiatives, including monuments holding in their ossuaries remains of soldiers of different faiths and from different sides. Šarenac points out that a unique

393 Manojlović Pintar, 2014, 4/10.

394 Ljiljana Dobrovšak, "Mjesta sjećanja na Prvi svjetski rat u Hrvatskoj – Ratni spomenici" ["WWI Sites of Memory in Croatia – War memorials"], *The End of the Great War Conference* (November 2018), 399-426.

395 Dobrovšak, 2018, 406.

396 Dobrovšak, 2018, 408. A number of memorials that were built in Croatia *during* the war, such as "memorial lime trees", "memorial shields", "memorial coat of arms", were removed once Croatia became part of the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes, as they had been built to honour the emperor, the Austro-Hungarian State and the Austro-Hungarian Army, Dobrovšak, 2018, 405.

397 Šarenac, 2014, 4/12.

398 Šarenac, 2014, 4/12.

monument was built in Čačak, Serbia, in 1934 by the Auxiliary Female Branch of the *Fédération Interalliée des Ancien Combattants* (FIDAC). This "memorial of Four Faiths" — with Orthodox, Catholic, Jewish and Muslim symbols — holds the remains of 918 soldiers, 262 of whom had fought on the side of the Central Powers.[399] It is an extraordinary instance of taking the memory of the Great War and gifting it to everyone who had lost a loved one, regardless of their side or religion. However, in most countries in South-east Europe "memories were wrapped in national colours"[400] and the dead were "national martyrs".[401]

The trends and conventions of burying the soldiers in the West, and the memorialisation of their service and sacrifice, were also dominant in South-east Europe, including Serbia. Soldiers were buried in military cemeteries, not divided by rank, while the search to find the names of all those who died was relentless, the tomb of the unknown soldier was built to represent all those who were not found, there were processions, minutes of silence, inscription of names of fallen soldiers — these all became a traditional way to commemorate all wars.

In the final part of the chapter, we consider how the return of history — initially the First World War history — into the Serbian public arena marked the beginning of the end of the Yugoslav state. The rediscovered memories of the First World War facilitated the rise of nationalism in the 1990s, and beyond.

5. The Case of Serbia

> "Serbs are so fascinated by their history that if you ask them 'What time is it?', you risk getting the answer: "Well, in 1389, it was the time of the great battle against the Turks at Kosovo Polje which

399 Šarenac, 2014, 4/12.
400 Manojlović Pintar, 2014, 5/10.
401 Šarenac, 2014, 2/12.

> resulted in our defeat and subjugation by them for the next five hundred years until finally in 1878 we got our revenge and again became a sovereign nation. A nation able to fight like lions in the First World War against the Germans, a war in which our country suffered greater proportional losses than any other. Alas, in 1941 it was the time in which the Germans got their revenge by occupying us. But we fought them again, plucky little Serb nation that we are, even though the Croatians joined the Nazis and killed 700,000 of us in the Jasenovac concentration camp. But they lost in 1945 and so a year later, as the Yugoslavs, it was time to crush the Kosovar Albanian uprising. And now it's ten past three.'"[402]

In May 1996, at the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia, the first trial for the crimes committed in the wars of Yugoslav succession was getting under way. It was the first war crimes trial in Europe after Nuremberg. There was much publicity for the trial, although the accused Duško Tadić was not a *big fish* by any means. Nevertheless, after horrendous pictures of starved prisoners had surfaced from the Omarska camp,[403] where he had been a guard, the world wanted to see justice done. The *President Kennedylaan*, the long six-lane avenue in the Hague, where the Tribunal was located, was besieged by reporters. An enormous satellite dish appeared overnight, as did several kiosks with global news brands: CNN, BBC, ITN. Most magnificently, a large red marquee housing a press centre was installed in front of the seat of the ICTY, as if to confirm that indeed the circus had come to town. They all came to see what they expected would be a fast-paced courtroom drama, with eloquent pleadings and dramatic testimonies.[404] The first to appear was an expert witness, Dr James Gow, a political scientist who was to

402 Tim Marshall, *Shadowplay Behind the Lines and Under Fire. The Inside Story of Europe's Last War.* (London: Elliott and Thompson, 2019), 24.

403 "The International Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia charges 21 Serbs with atrocities committed inside and outside the Omarska death camp", *ICTY Press release*, 13 February 1995 http://www.icty.org/en/press/international-tribunal-former-yugoslavia-charges-21-serbs-atrocities-committed-inside-and (accessed January 20, 2019).

404 Author's own memories as staff of the ICTY 1994 – 2003.

testify on the *subject matter jurisdiction,* essentially to give an overview of the political situation in the former Yugoslavia, its history, and its contextual specificities. Before long, the expectations of courtroom drama were dashed: Dr Gow gave detailed testimony over five days and was asked questions that were meant to establish Bosnian Serbian aggression in 1991, and the Bosnian Serb leaders' activities in Bosnia in 1992, but when asked about the history of the region, his answers inevitably went back to the 14th century, through the finer points of 1878, the Balkan Wars, the First World War, and finally the Second World War, before getting to the 1990s. At one point, even the accused seemed to have had enough of history and took his headphones off.[405] Reporters from international news services followed suit. The red marquee and the kiosks were gone within days.

In her essay "Value changes in the interpretations of history in Serbia",[406] Dubravka Stojanović quotes a sentence by Richard Holbrooke, the Clinton administration's chief negotiator for the Balkans who brokered the Dayton Peace Accord in 1995, which ended the catastrophe that had engulfed the region since 1991. Holbrooke reportedly began one of his negotiation rounds with the admonition: "Serbs, gentlemen, just without history and similar crap".[407] Holbrooke knew that if he let 1914 or 1918 into the discussions, let alone 1941, he would not get very far. Stojanović's explanation on how Serbian society was *primed* for war in the years following Tito's death demonstrates that history was purposefully misused to achieve a national awakening, creating an environment where extremist nationalistic ideas that would have been beyond the pale previously, were swiftly welcomed and allowed to thrive. In *Populism the Serbian Way,* Stojanović analyses Serbian society, politics, and history, with special attention to the Serbian relationship with history. Through her

405 All hearings were simultaneously interpreted from and into English, French and Bosnian/Croatian/Serbian so the accused would have been receiving interpretation from English into B/C/S, see Prosecutor vs. Duško Tadić, IT-94-1-T, 7 May 1996 http://www.icty.org/x/cases/tadic/trans/en/960507IT.htm (accessed January 20, 2019) page 100 of the English transcript.

406 Stojanović, 2017, 153.

407 Quoted in Stojanović, 2017, 153.

nine essays she examines different aspects of Serbian society, what led to the wars of the 1990s, how they are taught in schools, and discussed in the public arena today. For Stojanović, what occurred in Serbia in the 1980s and eventually steered Yugoslavia into war, was deliberately caused through a series of representations of *historical* episodes, accompanied by "para-historical explanations" presented as justification for aggressive action. Using the Serbian example, Stojanović exposes the danger in allowing populist attitudes to take hold in society, and explains that populism is paradoxically a system which poses as being anti-system: "it annuls institutions, tramples over laws, alters collective memory, constructs a new identity for a nation, and pokes its nose into the private affairs of its citizens."[408] Stojanović specifically diagnoses memory as a symptom of populism, because historical awareness is necessary for the "construction of national identity, which is the obsession of every populism, particularly of the right-wing kind".[409]

After Tito's death in 1980, the fabric of Yugoslav socialism was beginning to wear thin because of its unsustainable economic situation, inherent political weaknesses, and overall stagnation. As frozen political elites, after years of the inertness of a one-party system, had no other ideas except "After Tito — Tito",[410] there was some loosening of cultural and artistic life. Stojanović pinpoints two cultural instances in the mid-1980s, when Serbian "implosion of history" started to occur.[411] In 1983, the Yugoslav Drama Theatre in Belgrade staged the play *Battle of Kolubara* based on a WWI epic novel[412] from the 1970s that had achieved great success when it was published. The play depicted an episode from the novel, a famous 1914 battle where the Serbian Army was victorious.[413] The play became a sensation with audiences almost delirious with excitement: "during

408 Stojanović, 2017, 9.
409 Stojanović, 2017, 10.
410 "I posle Tita – Tito" was the slogan used by his political successors, popularised in the media, educational institutions, etc.
411 Stojanović, 2017, 142.
412 Ćosić, 1972. Ćosić became a champion of Serbian nationalism and the first president of the so-called 'rump Yugoslavia', Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, 1992 – 1993.
413 Dobrica Ćosić, *Kolubarska bitka* [*The Kolubara Battle*], Belgrade, Yugoslav Drama Theatre, 1983.

the play it appeared as though the battle was ongoing and the audience was participating in it. People were standing up, shouting "Charge!" cheering and crying."[414] In 1985, a short novel, *A Book About Milutin*[415] was published, telling the story in the first person singular about a Serbian peasant who has been through the main events in Serbian history, from the Balkan wars, through the Albanian retreat and the civil war into the Second World War, and ending up in a communist prison. He bears it in a heroic, fatalistic manner, making several light-hearted observations about life, death, and destiny, which makes his own story all the more tragic. In addressing the reader in a familiar and good-natured way, he embodies the Serbian national identity narrative: Serbs as tragic heroes, victims, betrayed by friends and allies, freedom-loving, rebellious, and always suffering. The novel outsold all others, despite its limited literary value.[416] As the Serbs have a special relationship with the First World War, it was this war that ignited the initial "implosion of history", while the Second World War took centre stage in the grooming of the nation for the wars of the 1990s.

In the late 1980s, seemingly out of nowhere, government-sponsored historians started appearing on television every night lecturing about "real or invented details"[417] of the Ustasha[418] crimes against Serbs in the Second World War.[419] The term *Croat* was being heard as often as *Ustasha*, the two deliberately confused in discourse to *remind* the Serbian public that what happened in the past could still happen in the present. This was subsequently done to the term *Turks* to describe *Bosniaks* before the

414 Stojanović, 2017, 142.
415 Danko Popović, *Knjiga o Milutinu* [*The Book about Milutin*] (Beograd: Književne novine, 1986)
416 Stojanović, 2017, 143.
417 Stojanović, 2017, 153.
418 Nazi-puppet government in charge of the "Independent State of Croatia" 1941 – 1945.
419 Documented in a report "Political Propaganda and the Plan to Create a State for All Serbs: Consequences of Using the Media for Ultra Nationalist End", prepared by expert witness Renaud de la Brosse at the request of the Office of the Prosecutor of the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia. The report can be found at https://www.icty.org/x/cases/slobodan_milosevic/prosexp/bcs/rep-srb-b.htm (accessed March 31, 2020)

war in Bosnia.[420] The *imagined*, *invented*, and *constructed* identities were being played against each other as they were being used to define each other. The past was hijacking the present in broad daylight, with people mesmerised by horror stories of brutal murders of Serbs in 1941.[421] One could call it a form of historical/hysterical hypnosis, as if the Pied Piper of Hamelin was luring Serbs to perdition by playing a song about past sufferings. However, the Serbs should not be absolved of responsibility, as Stojanović cautions us,[422] because they *consciously* abandoned agency and responsibility for their conduct. The political context was such that they were being presented with *spiked memories*, and they took them as history without asking any questions. In the late 1980s, and more forcefully in the early 1990s, "historical injustices" against Serbs were brought out as something that had to be *righted* urgently, creating an atmosphere of uncertainty and hostility.[423] Victims of past wars and of war crimes have to be remembered and memorialised, but this distorted *history* was not about the victims at all. It was about preparing the terrain for the reconfiguration of the Yugoslav State, by any means necessary, so the former communist elites that had converted to Serbian nationalism would stay in power, under the pretence of being the nation's saviours.[424] While alarmed at the tenor of the Serbian nationalist discourse, the former communist elites in other parts of Yugoslavia were also finding it a useful historical exercise for their own interests to remind their audiences of their own grievances — and so it began. The historical primers were creating a new reality — one where conflicts from the past were being presented as an on-going present experience. As Stojanović put it, history "became a kind of experimental science … it was assigned a task of producing new reality … The recomposed and reworked past had the task of producing

420 Stojanović, 2017, 153. According to La Brosse's report from 2003, Milošević was controlling the media from around 1986 – 1987 imposing a nationalist agenda. See also "The War of Words: Expert Report on Propaganda Released", *Coalition for International Justice (CIJ)* https://iwpr.net/global-voices/war-words-expert-report-propaganda-released (accessed March 31, 2020).

421 Judah, 2003, 42.

422 Stojanović, 2017, 159.

423 Stojanović, 2017, 153.

424 Stojanović, 2017, 154.

a new future."[425] Para-historical assertions presented a "conflict concept of history" so that the real conflict became a logical outcome of historical animosities, where Serbian aggression was alchemically transformed into a necessary action to *prevent new genocide*.[426] The value system had to be adapted where national emotions were the *primum movens* and thus became the litmus test of identity. If you were not moved to tears by the play *Battle of Kolubara* or by the tragic story of Milutin,[427] then you were not a good Serb — you were a traitor. This takes us far away from Montesquieu's priority values and from Margalit's ethics of memory.

The "new, mythical narrative"[428] was put together from various pieces of historical facts in such a way so as to "reconstruct a new national and historical consciousness which was a blend of delusion of grandeur, and self-pity, of national arrogance, and self-victimization."[429] Most alarmingly, this new histrionic mash-up was being taught in schools, with the subject of history becoming a conduit to learning *how to be* Serbian.[430] Following the years of socialist rule, which had erased or displaced unsuitable history, the new historical priorities were presented as a "return to oneself", which is what Smith means when he describes a search for the authentic self as part of the myth of the golden age.[431] This rediscovery of the *true self* comprised *remembering* about the *other*, the antagonist, which required "not just a shift in interpretation, but also a change of facts".[432] This new "mythical narrative", comprising key elements from the Serbian perception of history, such as hero-worship, cult of death, and sacrifice, also contained the Serbian people themselves as "the main protagonist of history".[433] Anderson's "aura of fatality"[434] may be applied to the period

425 Stojanović, 2017, 154.
426 Stojanović, 2017, 154.
427 "Milutin" will reappear as a monument in Kraljevo in chapter IV.
428 La Brosse's report on propaganda lists "myths and history" as ingredients of propaganda used by Milošević's media in the late 1980s and 1990s.
429 Stojanović, 2017, 156.
430 Stojanović, 2017, 156.
431 Anthony Smith, "The 'Golden Age' and National Renewal", in Hosking and Schöpflin, 1997, 40.
432 Stojanović, 2017, 157.
433 Stojanović, 2017, 157.
434 Anderson, 1991, 145.

of the *implosion of history*, because they were being fed mutated memory, Serbs felt they were inhabited by the *Spirit of History*, that they were doing what they were supposed to do. Stojanović explains that "'the people' were essentialized as a 'unique being', almost like a biological community, an organism with clearly defined traits that deny any individuality, particularity, or pluralism."[435] In the late 1980s and the early 1990s under the Milošević regime, Serbs as a nation made a "crucial discovery" of their "choiceless identity" to use Amartya Sen's term.[436] This *rediscovered* identity was embraced and followed — all the way to war. For Stojanović, this "essentialist concept of the nation" continues in Serbia today.[437]

In her essay "Narrative on WWI as the energy drink of Serbian nationalism",[438] Stojanović reflects on the emotive reception of Christopher Clark's book *The Sleepwalkers* in Serbia in 2013. The Serbian government had introduced Armistice Day as an official holiday at the end of 2011 and it was celebrated for the first time in 2012. The Serbian government was looking forward to the centenary commemorations of the WWI. As Foreign Minister Dačić stated in 2013, it was the war "that made Serbia famous".[439] Serbs could sing along heartily with Georges Brassens saying that the war of 1914 – 1918 was their favourite war too: even though the nation had suffered, it had emerged victorious and heroic, with considerable international attention. The centenary commemorations were an opportunity to *remind* the world, as well as Serbs themselves, that those brave soldiers from 100 years ago, were the true face of Serbia, not the terrible images on their screens in the 1990s. The arrival of Clark's book caused genuine panic that he was coming to spoil the party because his book was reputed to depict Serbs as the culprits for the outbreak of

435 Stojanović, 2017, 157.
436 Sen, 2006, 36-39.
437 Stojanović, 2017, 157.
438 Stojanović, 2017, 139.
439 "Nama je svaki odlazak na Krf opelo" ["We hold a memorial service every time we come to Corfu"]. *B92*, September 26, 2013. http://www.b92.net/info/vesti/index.php?yyyy=2013&mm=09&dd=26&nav_category=11&nav_id=758324 (accessed September 30, 2013).

the First World War.[440] As Stojanović observes, almost as in in 1914, but with different means, mobilisation of all available forces was carried out to counter the heresy of Serbia as the guilty party.[441] As a result, separate events were held in Bosnia, one by Serbian officials from Serbia and Republika Srpska[442] and the other by Federation[443] officials. It was clear that the confrontation lines were still in place and that there would be no consensus, or even an understanding that events could have multiple perspectives. As Stojanović put it: "history was misused in order to express contemporary problems, to voice the burning issues of today using the language of the past and render them emotionally charged."[444] People were choosing the past over the present. Although serious historiographic works related to the First World War were published in the 1980s, and subsequently, they are no match for memory.

The First World War is a perfect *usable* past for the Serbian government because it contains the main characteristics of the Serbian *mythomoteur*. Stojanović identifies a number of mythical aspects, among them death. The number of Serbian casualties in the First World War are presented almost triumphantly — it is celebrated as martyrdom which "becomes an obligation for survivors".[445] Stojanović considers it a "death cult". The way this is presented in the media and history textbooks, it seems that there is no other way to live for the country you were born in but to die for it. As Stojanović explains, the relationship with death establishes "a value system that is closer to epic poetry than to modern standards by which life is the ultimate value".[446] In this sense, the "death cult" connects with Anderson's "aura of fatality"[447] and Mosse's *cult of the war dead* and "cult of the nation".[448] It is also closely related to the "heroic code" whereby the

440 Stojanović, 2017, 139.
441 Stojanović, 2017, 139-140.
442 Serbian entity in Bosnia.
443 Bosnian and Croatian entities.
444 Stojanović, 2017, 140.
445 Stojanović, 2017, 144.
446 Stojanović, 2017, 145.
447 Anderson, 1991, 145.
448 Mosse, 1990, 105, 224.

highest act that anyone can do for their country is to die, which is more valued than anything else. At the same time, the First World War has a wealth of episodes that can be harvested for mythical content, one such being that a French general had said that *the Serbian infantry was advancing so fast during the breakthrough of the Salonika front that French cavalry could not keep up*.[449] This is a ludicrous statement that has been repeated throughout the years of the centenary commemorations, but more alarmingly was also included in a history textbook for 14-year-olds.[450]

In "Culture Wars: Serbian History Textbooks and the Construction of National Identity",[451] Keith Crawford examines the dominant values of patriotism and collectivism in history textbooks in 1990s, and their changes since the downfall of the Milošević regime. During the Milošević years, pupils were presented with a past where Serbs were always surrounded by hostile nations, non-Serbs who usually collaborated with the enemy in wars. There was outright propaganda about Serbia as a nation in danger, having to retaliate against its enemies.[452] While some of the most egregious nationalistic passages were taken out after 2000, Crawford points out that "a strong sense of patriotic and nationalist fervour remains an important element in the new history textbooks in Serbia where chapters on Serbian national and international history are kept separate from world history".[453] Crawford gives the example of the way WWI is presented in a history textbook for 17 and 18-year-olds. The language is emotional and resonates with patriotic pride when talking about the success of the Serbian Army and heroism of its soldiers, and full of disgust when talking about atrocities against civilians.[454] There

449 Stojanović, 2017, 147. This claim is repeated in the "Decisive Breakthrough" on Serbia.com http://www.serbia.com/about-serbia/serbia-history/world-war-one/decisive-breakthrough/ (accessed May 11, 2020).

450 Stojanović, 2017, 147.

451 Keith Crawford, "Culture Wars: Serbian History Textbooks and the Construction of National Identity", *International Journal of Historical Learning, Teaching and Research* (Volume 3 Number 2 July 2003): 43- 52.

452 Crawford, 2003, 49.

453 Crawford, 2003, 50.

454 Crawford, 2003, 51.

is no detachment or demonstration of what history is, or that it should be approached on the basis of facts. Emotions are presented as facts and Crawford concludes that these "emotive descriptions" continue to dominate the Serbian relationship to their past.

We have looked at how the subject of the Retreat is presented in the most recent history textbooks for 17-and-18-year-olds, *History* by Djordje Djurić and Momčilo Pavlović, published in 2010, and *History IV* by Mira Radojević, from 2018.[455] The 2010 history textbook gives an overview of the situation in Serbia in 1915 with considerable emphasis on the suffering and sacrifice of the Serbian people and on the superiority of the enemy. The latter is mentioned three times on one page.[456] Special mentions are given to Major Gavrilović and his legendary defence of Belgrade speech from 1915, and to Field Marshall Mackensen who led the attack on Serbia. Mackensen is lauded for paying his respects to Serbian courage and erecting a monument to those fallen in the defence of Belgrade.[457] The necessity for the Retreat is partly explained, and while there are some important moments, which are described, it is not always clear why certain things happened, for instance, why the Serbian Army had to destroy heavy artillery as they were retreating, or why the "local Albanian gangs" were attacking Serbian refugees.[458] After the recovery in Corfu helped by the Allies, the Serbian Army is transported to Salonika "resurrected".[459] Later in the text, equally no explanation is given as to why the Salonika Front "did not move for two years".[460] In the 2018 history textbook, there are even fewer facts and more emotion. The Retreat is "unequalled suffering" but not much is given in the way of cause and effect.[461] Once the Serbian Army arrived on the Albanian coast, Italians

455 Djordje Djurić and Momčilo Pavlović, Istorija [History] (Beograd: Zavod za udžbenike, 2010); Mira Radojević, Istorija IV [History IV] (Beograd: Klett, 2018).
456 Djurić and Pavlović, 2010, 94.
457 Both will feature later in the thesis, chapter IV.
458 Djurić and Pavlović, 2010, 96.
459 Djurić and Pavlović, 2010, 97.
460 Djurić and Pavlović, 2010, 97.
461 Radojević, 2018, 114.

"delayed offering their help".[462] No explanation is given, only that the French took over the evacuation.[463] The quotes from survivors of the Retreat given in the textbook are literary and poignant but do not offer more insight. While the events described in the two textbooks are not *wrong*, their presentation does not provide a historical overview of an arguably extraordinary event. The overall impression is that of a Greek tragedy — and sure enough the 1915 Retreat does have all the elements of one. But these are history textbooks, where history should not come second to *epos.*

In "Resistant pasts versus mnemonic hegemony: On the power relations of collective memory",[464] Berthold Molden looks at the way interactions between *hegemonic master narratives*, *defiant counter-memories*, and *silent majorities*, govern the politics of history and memory in societies. Molden considers how "grand historical narratives" on which nation's identities are based can be taken apart, systems dismantled as victims become perpetrators and vice versa, as they engage in "struggles of competitive victimhood".[465] Molden examines the concept of "mnemonic hegemony" where a political regime imposes a certain version of past events. As Molden notes, there is never just one version of what happened and there are always different groups within society who have their own narratives, even though they may be subjugated.[466] The *mnemonic hegemony* portrays the present as the only possible outcome of the past, silencing dissident versions because they are undermining the legitimacy of the ruling order. These mnemonic power relations can be overturned and the new memory culture established, although not necessarily encompassing all those who had challenged it or succeeded in overturning it.[467] Molden links the uncertainty of "the dominant political order that imposes memory" to

462 Radojević, 2018, 114.
463 This is incidentally contradicted by the research published from the material reportedly found in the Italian military archives, as discussed in chapter III.
464 Berthold Molden, "Resistant pasts versus mnemonic hegemony: On the power relations of collective memory", *Memory Studies* (2016, Vol.9 no. 12): 125-142.
465 Molden, 2016, 126.
466 Molden, 2016, 130.
467 Molden, 2016, 131.

the likelihood of the "significant changes in mnemonic power relations".[468] The case of Serbia presents a situation where the *mythomoteur* has such a hold on the national psyche that whoever manages to best embody it acquires mnemonic power. This means holding the ultimate historical authority without allowing anyone to challenge the narrative. Despite the fact that the holders of the hegemonic narrative have changed in Serbia several times in the past 100 years, its sacrificial core has stayed the same.

In "The Serbian mythomoteur as sacrificial narrative",[469] Nevena Daković notes that the Serbian *mythomoteur* of Kosovo comprising "martyrdom, victimization, injustice, suffering, heavenly kingdom and death", meaning "victory in defeat through ultimate sacrifice in death"[470] represents the way Serbs think about world and their relationship with it. This is what Gillis meant when he said that "identities and memories are not things we think *about* but things we think *with*".[471] Kosovo as the main Serbian myth was revived in the 1999 NATO air strikes: the air war began because of Kosovo, adding "another layer of sentiment to the sacrificial narrative". Serbia — or the regime acting for Serbia — again embraced "sacrifice, martyrdom and victimization substantiating the sense of narcissistic ethical superiority based upon [an] ethnical one".[472] Daković finds that the First World War centenary events offered an opportunity to reconceptualise the myth of sacrifice placing it in a European context with a different focus turned towards "the sacrifice through hardships of life and not to the sacrifice by dying or death".[473] Daković examines several examples of films and plays that have the First World War as a theme where death does not appear uniformly as martyrdom but could be accidental, meaningless, or an individual act rather than "a collective sacrifice".[474] There is no doubt that the First World War centenary events have replaced the Kosovo myth as

468 Molden, 2016, 131.
469 Nevena Daković, "The Serbian mythomoteur as sacrificial narrative", *Frontiers of Narrative Studies* (4,1, 2018): 140-145.
470 Daković, 2018, 140.
471 Gillis, 1994, 5.
472 Daković, 2018, 141.
473 Daković, 2018, 142.
474 Daković, 2018, 144.

mythomoteur although the cult of death and sacrifice remain robust, as we shall see in the examples of the way the Albanian retreat and associated events from the First World War are remembered. One of the significant observations in Daković's article was the way Serbia's President Vučić has been constructing his own image in keeping with the sacrificial narrative. "It is the myth of constant personal suffering and sacrifice that asserts the welfare of the nation … President Vučić gets up at 5 o'clock: in fact he hardly sleeps at all; he is ready to do anything and to ask/beg/plea to anyone if it is for the wellbeing of the nation."[475] This was further accentuated when, at the central commemoration of the end of the First World War, on 11 November 2018 in Paris, ostensibly because of a protocol error by the French hosts, Vučić was positioned sitting among the *second-rank* nations,[476] instead of being seated among the main countries, France, Germany, US, and Britain. To add insult to injury, the president of Kosovo, Hashim Thaçi, found himself seated among the latter. The front pages of all newspapers in Serbia were aghast: "The Last Slap in Paris",[477] "Paris is no longer the City of Lights"[478] while Serbia's humiliation was spelled out and lamented in all the editorials. Vučić's official reaction was that he had a very difficult time, particularly watching the Kosovo president sitting where the Serbian president should have been, but that he contained his disappointment and hurt, and did what he had to do for Serbia.[479] It is the continuation of the sacrificial narrative this time applied in respect of unfortunate seating arrangements.

475 Daković, 2018, 144.

476 President Vučić was seated next to the President of Austria to much amusement of regional satirists who thought that neither would have found it very pleasant.

477 Miloš Ković, "Poslednji šamar u Parizu" ["The Last Slap in Paris"], *Politika*, 7 December 2018 http://www.politika.rs/sr/clanak/417157/Pogledi/Poslednji-samar-u-Parizu (accessed December 15, 2018).

478 Boško Jakšić, "Pariz više nije grad svetlosti" ["Paris is no longer the City of Lights"], *Politika*, 11 November 2018 http://www.politika.rs/sr/clanak/415519/Pariz-vise-nije-Grad-svetlosti (accessed November 12, 2018).

479 "Šta je neko mislio kada je Tačija stavio iza Putina" ["What were they thinking when they put Thaçi behind Putin"], *B92*, 11 November 2018 https://www.b92.net/info/vesti/index.php?yyyy=2018&mm=11&dd=11&nav_category=11&nav_id=1468110 (accessed November 15, 2018).

Serbian *mythemes* are dominated by the death cult which is linked to the heroic cult. *Serbian exceptionalism* consists of heroism, despising death, having exceptional aptitude, and the ability to continuously suffer, including sacrificing oneself for others, for which they receive no gratitude. Milutin's story includes him reminiscing about liberating other parts of Yugoslavia in 1918, without knowing where they were, only knowing he was supposed to do it.[480] This ties in with the myth of injustice,[481] the implication being that Serbs, noble and naive, were stabbed in the back.[482] This is certainly reminiscent of Germany's injustice myth — *Dolchstoss* — leading to the desire for retaliation — which brings us to another possible interpretation as to why the Serbian establishment so vehemently opposed Clark's book and viewed it as *historical revisionism.* If Serbia was at least partly responsible for the First World War, its record regarding that war would be tainted. The First World War could then not be the perfect repository of a usable past nor could it be used for *historical frame switching* which we will discuss further. Moreover, the wars of the 1990s might no longer be seen as an *aberration*, but could be interpreted as a continuation of Serbian nationalist aggression; Clark said as much in his introduction to *The Sleepwalkers*.[483] This leads us to suggest that if the Serbs cannot face different interpretations of what happened in 1914, the chances that they would want to hear other versions of what happened in the 1990s are slim.

Conclusion Chapter II

In order to investigate the motivations behind the Serbian handling of the past and the lack thereof, we focus on the concepts of memory, history, and identity, and how they resonate in the Serbian context. The concept of memory is disputed even though the personal experience of it

480 Stojanović, 2017, 147.
481 Stojanović observes that the feeling of injustice is "the stongest glue of a nation" in Stojanović, "The Mythical War", *Peščanik*, 5 July 2014.
482 Stojanović, 2017, 148.
483 Clark, 2013, xxvi.

seems absolute. Maurice Halbwachs was able to clarify this contradiction by explaining how our subjective understanding of the past works conjointly with other people's recollections. The collective collage will always be more complete than the individual picture, but it will still be a "retrospective mirage". Halbwachs observes the lack of reliable individual experience of the past and qualifies "social frameworks of memory" as the most stable structures of the remembered past. For Jay Winter, it is the plurality of remembrance that matters, kept alive by groups of people who come together to remember past events. All nations remember and forget, which is necessary for their foundation, as demonstrated by Ernest Renan. Jay Winter makes the important distinction that people are those who remember and forget, not nations. People, grouped as nations, depend on the remembrance of their past, to differentiate themselves from others through their *remembered* history. People, carriers of national identity, imagine, invent and construct their past. This is done by selecting relevant historical events that are mediated through many aspects of public life. Any parts of historical past considered harmful for the reputation of the nation may be discarded. These constructed pasts, including myths, contribute to the production of a "choiceless identity", or national belonging. This coincidental identity is thus considered an achievement in itself, leading to *dying for one's country* as a way of *being*.

The Great War, commemorated for its great *sacrifice* has structured the way we remember the dead in wars. The importance of the names of those who have fallen on the battlefield and the rituals of remembrance all have their origins in the aftermath of the Great War. We have looked at the Great War remembrance tropes both in Western Europe and in the South-east Europe finding similarities and variations in memorialisation. Serbia's connection to the First World War has been reinforced through the centenary commemorative events. This is illustrative of the merging of the heroic narrative with the suffering of the Serbian Army and civilians in the Retreat to produce the "sacrificial narrative". This is the dominant narrative of today's Serbia, used to reframe reality and oppose any attempt to reassess past events because any alternative views of the past are

considered threatening to the *status quo*. This frozen mythical sacrifice has a crucial role in maintaining the dominant narrative of victimhood. It ties in with what Serbs believe about themselves and their past with faith acting as a *blinker* in their present.

In the next chapter, we examine the events of Serbia's *favourite war* that led to the Serbian Army Retreat of 1915. The Retreat and its impact continue to live in the Serbian national consciousness 100 years later without showing any signs of abating. The story of the Retreat and the related images help explain the longevity of the narrative.